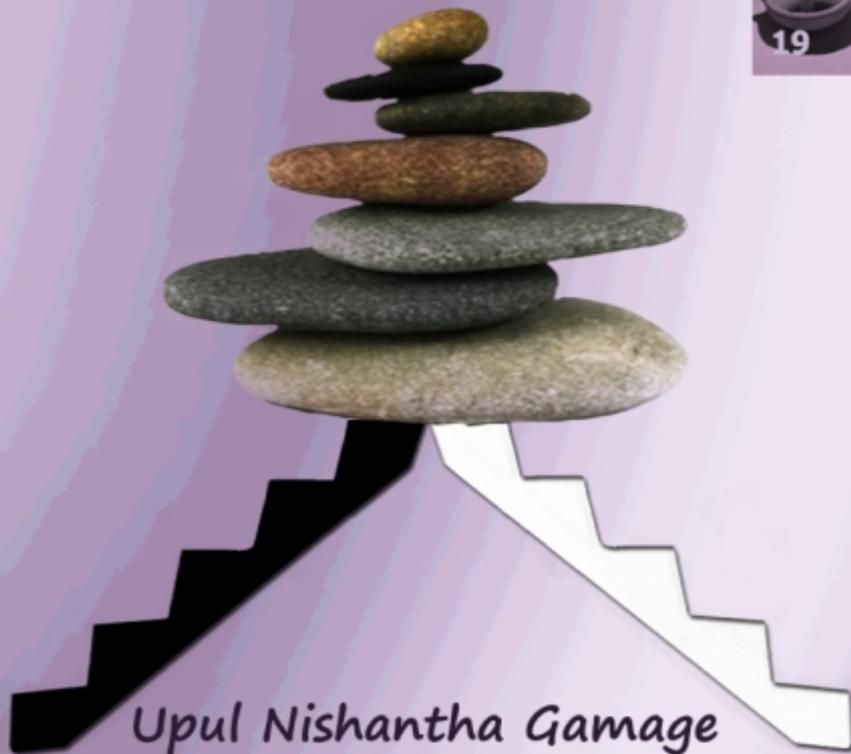


Seeing

the Nature of the World



Upul Nishantha Gamage

We cannot escape from the world because it is everywhere; whether we are at home, at work, in our hometown, in another country, at a meditation centre or in the woods. Wherever the world exists, the eight worldly conditions such as gain and loss, fame and disrepute, praise and blame, and happiness and suffering exist. These conditions are called the nature of the world, because there is no place in the world where we do not come across them. As we cling to gain, fame, praise, and happiness and resist loss, disrepute, blame, and suffering, we are oppressed by them.

A person who practises Dhamma and associates with an exemplar is not oppressed by the worldly conditions. Such a person sees that these worldly conditions do not last long and are subject to change. Any gain can turn into a loss, and any loss can turn into a gain. Praise or blame does not stay as it is forever. A person who thinks in this manner stands firm in front of the worldly conditions. The worldly conditions exist but we can face them and stand firm.



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Light of Nilambe

Dhamma Dāna

In memory of our beloved father & mother

Ridley Fernando & Violet Fernando

May they attain Nibbāna!

with Love and Gratitude

Nalin- Sheela- Charith & Kasun

Seeing the Nature of the World

Talk given by

Upul Nishantha Gamage

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1. The most valuable gift

Dear Dhamma Friends, having meditated for some time, at this moment when your mind and body are calm, let's think for a while about the importance of a day like today. If a day like today had not existed in the past, we would not have been here. **The Dhamma gifted by the Lord Buddha to mankind produced a perfect human possessing humanity and human qualities.** Moreover, the Dhamma was instrumental in freeing the mind which suffered by being stuck in the midst of unending problems.

There were thousands of religions in the world. Even today, there are so many religions. Therefore, a need for religion did not exist then. Even today, it is the same. Two extreme views with regard to achieving spiritual liberation existed then. One view was about starving the body or rigorous self-mortification, and the other was about enjoying pleasures of sense through all possible means or leading a life of indulgence. Within these two extreme views, there were hundreds and thousands of religions then. It is the same today. Based on some other views, certain religions believed that liberation was possible by committing suicide. Also, killing others was a good deed. About

2600 years ago, no additional confusion was added to those that already existed then.

2. Turning solutions into problems

Regardless of when and where humans lived, they suffered the most mentally, because a human mind can create suffering limitlessly. Physical suffering such as hunger and thirst has limits. However, **suffering created by the mind has no limits. Your suffering is proportionate to the number of problems created by your mind.** Humans have the highest ability to create problems in the mind. No other being has the ability to create problems in the mind like a human being. Such creativity in the human mind is used for creating problems. A problem is something that we create in our mind (*saṃskāra*).

Though a job is a solution, when a person thinks about his/her job, a mind that produces problems sees more and more job related problems. Therefore, a job turns into a chain of problems. The economy is a solution. Money is a solution. However, thinking of the economy or money creates diverse problems. This is true for everything. For instance, a house is a solution. A house is a place which provides individual space and

protection for a person. A mind can make this solution or the house the beginning of a chain of problems. **The more and more you think about your house, the more and more problems you see; other residents, the furniture, the plan, the rooms, the dimensions, the courtyard, the colour etc.**

3. Filling the vacuum

Dear Dhamma Friends, this is the nature of the mind. A human always suffers due to diverse reasons. Religions were needed as a solution for reducing suffering. **If a person does not have any problem, there is no need for religion.** If science, politics, money and physical strength can solve all the problems, there is no need for religion. However, **all these abilities, sciences, arts, and techniques stop at a certain point, leaving problems behind;** money runs out, physical strength dwindles, jobs to be completed are lined up in front of us, time passes by, we grow old. However, fear and repentance over things that we could not do grow. **A religion is needed to fill the gap, because science, money and politics cannot do that. Religions were born because nothing else could fill the gap or the vacuum.** All these religions added an additional suffering to the existing suffering of humans. This additional suffering is the feeling that

the human is a sinner or a rotter. There is no point in talking about it as everybody has that feeling. Animals do not feel that way. Such a feeling is attributed to humans, especially through religion. **According to Buddhism, no human is a sinner.** Buddhism did not add a new suffering to that we already undergo.

4. The three pieces of advice

According to the Dhamma, some things happen to divine beings (*devas*) when they get close to dying; flowers worn by them start to wither, their clothes get discoloured and faded, they start to sweat, their sweat starts to smell, and they feel like changing where they sit. All these things indicate that they are going to die. According to the Dhamma, other divine beings would give three pieces of advice to the one who is going to die: be born in a happy realm, acquire confidence (*saddhā*), and develop steadfast confidence. When the Lord Buddha preached about this, some other monks asked: “What is the happy realm for divine beings?” The happy realm for divine beings is the human world.

There is no point in being born as a human without acquiring confidence. This confidence should be something that cannot be changed by anything or anybody. This confidence should be like a well-rooted tree, which is not going to be knocked over by any wind. The three pieces of advice are: be born in a happy realm, acquire confidence (*saddhā*), and develop steadfast confidence.

5. Not born by chance

Dear Dhamma Friends, when we ponder on this manner, on the one hand, we can guess that those who are born in the human world were probably divine beings in the previous birth. It is quite possible, especially for those who inherit confidence by birth and lead a life in a manner that makes confidence grow, to be up the. **Buddhism does not refer to human being as sinners. Buddhism gave real value to the human for the first time in human history.** Before that, a human was considered a mallet or a product produced in a factory by somebody, or a slave or a servant. Moreover, being born as a human was considered as a punishment imposed by somebody.

Buddhism gave a divine value to humans who were made to plead and pray to God by other religions. Therefore, all of us can be happy that our birth as humans did not happen by chance. Sometimes, spiritual deva friends may have asked us to be born in the human world. Acquire confidence. Afterwards, cultivate it by watering and fertilizing it. Develop steadfast confidence which cannot be changed by anything/anybody. We may have listened to that advice in our previous birth, though we do not remember that now. We may have forgotten lots of things. However, we cannot say that there is no past. Therefore, **we did not get this opportunity by chance or by tossing a coin.** Being born as a human is an important junction of a journey that we acquired as a result of fulfilling the Buddhahood qualities, something we wished for, and something we searched for.

6. The most valuable and rare opportunity

The Dhamma talks about 8 untimely or unsuitable periods and 8 inopportune occasions that do not give an opportunity to make up the mind, to listen to the Dhamma discourses, to discuss Dhamma, to contemplate on Dhamma, to retain Dhamma in mind and live accordingly. Therefore, existence in

any of the four realms of hell is an untimely period, which does not give any opportunity to do anything associated with the Dhamma. The fifth untimely period and inopportune occasion exists in the heavens where beings have extremely long lifespans. As the lifespan of beings in such heavens is so long, by the time one being turns the head from right to left, the emergence, preaching and death of a Lord Buddha may have taken place. Also, the Buddhist order may have vanished.

The sixth untimely period and inopportune occasion exists in places in the human world where there is no opportunity to listen to the Dhamma discourses, to read about the Dhamma and to discuss the Dhamma. In Buddhism, such places are called barbarian places. In such places, there are no monks and devotees. There is no communication of Dhamma. Such places exist in this human world, even today. Though today's world is developed and well developed methods of communication are available, there are places where talking about, reading about and discussing the Dhamma is prohibited by law. Living in such is described in Buddhism as inopportune occasions, which exist in the human world. In these places, living mindfully is prohibited by law. Someone can get punished for asking about Dhamma.

The 7th untimely period and inopportune occasion is to be mentally retarded or to be a sceptic. Such people do not understand anything. A sceptic holds firmly to wrong views: there is nothing called the mind; if a mind exists, just show it; does not believe in reincarnation, so looks for proof; is there any proof that good deeds bring good things and bad deeds bring bad things?; is it true that meditation develops the mind? Sceptics come to conclusions without even researching. The 8th untimely period and inopportune occasion is to be born at a time when the Buddhist order does not exist. There is nobody to talk and write about the Dhamma.

Just ponder over this rare opportunity we have got. Therefore, the Dhamma says that we are not born at an opportune time by chance. We are born at an opportune time as a result of having fulfilled Buddhahood qualities, committed merits, wished, and had determination in previous births. Being born an opportune time is not at all easy. We may not get this opportunity again. Nobody is sure to get this opportunity again. We are happy about this opportunity. Moreover, we may feel motivated about it. We need both happiness and motivation to walk along the path of Dhamma. We should be happy about

and grateful for this opportunity. This is a valuable and rare opportunity. We might not get this opportunity again. When we think in this manner, we feel thrilled, motivated and grateful.

What is this life for? While we are attending to the many needs of our life, we need to get closer to our prime goal step by step. We can find plenty of reasons for not doing what we need to do to reach this goal. Our mind points out so many reasons for that: I am so busy and agitated, I cannot do it now, I'll do it later, maybe tomorrow, maybe next year, maybe after retiring, maybe in the next birth. **We do not have time to postpone this because nothing is eternal; our eyes, our ears, our ability to see and hear, our thinking power and consciousness, our spiritual friends and so on. Even if everything is lost, suffering will be left, problems will be left, stress and weariness will be left, and repentance will block our way like a huge mountain.** We may think: "I could have meditated back then. It is too bad that I did not meditate back then." Only this repentance will be left and everything else will be lost. Therefore, make the maximum use of this rare opportunity. **You will not get a second opportunity.** We get only one opportunity. We can either make use of it or ignore it.

7. Duty of the Buddha

The Dhamma tells the story of a young devotee named Digayu. He has fallen seriously ill and stays at home. He is laid up. He feels so uncomfortable. He tells his father: “I feel terribly ill. I cannot even get up. Please meet the Lord Buddha and tell Him worshipfully about my illness.” So, his father worshipped the Lord Buddha and told Him: “I worshipped on behalf of my son who is seriously ill. If possible, please visit my son.” The Lord Buddha accepted that invitation quietly and went to see Digayu. The Lord Buddha saw that this young devotee was lying in bed in great difficulty.

The Lord Buddha asked: “How are you doing?” He replied: “I feel so uncomfortable.” The Lord Buddha: “How is your pain?” Digayu: “It is unbearable.” The Lord Buddha: “Does the pain intensify or subside?” Digayu: “It intensifies.” At that point the Lord Buddha preached: “**Acquire confidence well.**” The Lord Buddha did not ask about the hospitals he visited and the medicines he used. He did not advise him about medicine either. Such worldly advice is not expected from the Lord Buddha. If Digayu needed worldly advice, he would not have asked his father to visit the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha

knows Buddha's duty. The Lord Buddha advises: **“Acquire confidence well; confidence in the Triple Gem.”** Digayu said: “I have acquired confidence in the Triple Gem well. No matter what someone says, I do not doubt the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. I am virtuous. I do not doubt my virtuousness.”

Then the Lord Buddha said: “Digayu, **think about your life. You lose everything you make/create. It is impossible to make something that does not go disappear eventually. Acquire the notion that everything we make is impermanent** (perception of impermanence). **It is impossible to make something that is permanent. Also, acquire the notion that making impermanent things ends in suffering.** In this temporary world, we create things that cause suffering, because the world does not exist in the way that we would like it to be. We create expectation as we wish things to be otherwise in this changing world.

Look at the world as something that does not belong to you (perception of absence of self). **See that your suffering is impermanent and do not make suffering your ‘self.’** Do not own your suffering. Lessen your attachment to the world

(perception of dispassion). Then Digayu replied: “I live in that manner, I think in that manner.” Then, the Lord Buddha questioned: “What is your problem?” Digayu replied: “My problem is this: whether my death is going to make my father feel sad. I think about it. I wish that my death would not cause such sadness to my father.” Then, the Lord Buddha preached: “Such thoughts are not necessary. You ought to think in the manner that I preached to you. Do not think about such things.”

Having preached to Digayu, the Lord Buddha went back to the temple. On the same day Digayu died. The monks at the temple questioned the Lord Buddha: “The patient who you visited has died. Where has he been born? What has happened to him?” The Lord Buddha replied: “He is not going to be born again. He did not have any attachment. He had subdued all the fetters (*saññojana*) needed to be born again. Therefore, his journey ended.” The Lord Buddha made this statement about a youngster who lived at home.

8. Do not ignore

This story clearly indicates that all of us have got a very good opportunity to end this saṃsāric journey. **Someone does not have to be a special person to reap the fruits of Buddhism.** We were already born as special persons possessing the attributes necessary for reaping the results of Buddhism. It is not absolutely necessary to be special persons. **It is worth recognizing this marvellous opportunity all of us have got.** It is important to make use of this opportunity. We should not ignore this opportunity, thinking of things that we do not have, thinking of being somebody else. All this time, we have ignored this opportunity and postponed it for the future. We suffer while making others suffer.

9. No escaping

Dear Dhamma Friends, a clear difference exists between a person who has benefited from the Dhamma and another who has not benefited. All of us have to face life. All of us have to face the world. We struggle with the world from birth until death. There is no escape from the world. We cannot escape from the world. Wherever we go, we come across the world. We cannot escape from ourselves because wherever we go, we

meet ourselves. **We can escape neither ourselves nor the world.** We often think that we can escape from the world and ourselves. Such thoughts are so silly and childish. **The world is everywhere;** whether you are at home, at work, in your hometown, in another country, at a meditation centre or in the woods.

Wherever the world exists, eight worldly conditions exist. We cannot create or control these conditions. All of us are aware of the names of these 8 worldly conditions: gain and loss, fame and disrepute, blame and praise, and happiness and suffering. There is no place in the world where we do not come across these 8 conditions; whether we are in the kitchen, living room, and courtyard or on the veranda or on the road. Therefore, these conditions are called the nature of the world.

10. Your life story

These conditions talk to each human being. A gain comes and talks to us. There is nobody who has not had that experience. In different situations in life, gains have talked to all of us. We are so happy when we gain something. We grab that gain. **The gain does not hold hands with a person all the time. It leaves,**

allowing loss to take over. The loss also talks to us. There is no life which has not met loss.

Dear Dhamma Friends, all eight worldly conditions come to each one of us from time to time, whether you are a layperson or a monk, a female or a male, and rich or poor. These conditions enter our lives paying no attention to these differences. You can close all the doors, windows, and ventilation holes of your house to prevent even a mosquito or an ant from entering. However, you cannot prevent these eight worldly conditions from entering. Wherever you are, these eight worldly conditions come and meet you. It happens whether you live alone or with a group of people. There are times when you are praised a lot. There are times when you become such an essential person. There are periods when others are waiting for you. There are periods when you receive glory and honour from society; others say what a great person you are; all your investments become fruitful; you always find someone to help you. That person may be a friend or a relative. Somehow, all your needs are taken care of by those around you. There are periods when your life flows slowly and methodically like a beautiful river. There are periods when your life smells like a botanical garden full of flowers. All of us

have had experiences like these at different stages of our life. I am not telling a fairy story. **This is a story about you. This is your life story.** You may even be experiencing something similar right now.

However, life does not flow like a river all the time. **Life falls unexpectedly like a huge waterfall which divides the river into multiple branches.** All of us have come across similar situations in our lives. Everything we try fails. None of our expectations comes true. You do something with a good intention, but another person mistakes it for a bad intention. Those who were waiting for you clear off when you come. **Your life which was like a botanical garden has turned into a desert.** Is there anybody who has not experienced these things? All of us experience these worldly conditions.

These conditions speak to all of us through diverse incidents in life; through our job, marriage, the economy, health, relationships etc. Therefore, we do not see them as worldly conditions, but a problem associated with our job or our marriage or an illness of our body etc. We think like that. **However, our job or our marriage or illness of our body is just a medium or a window through which the worldly conditions**

enter. These worldly conditions enter someone's life through their job or marriage or the economy or their body etc. and speak to that person. Depending on the way s/he reacts, it is possible to recognize whether s/he has benefited from Buddhism or not. A person who is not aware of the Dhamma, who has not practised the **Dhamma, who has not had any experience associated with the Dhamma, clings onto one part of the worldly conditions and resists the other part; clings on to gain but resists loss; desires and expects praise from everybody but resists, clashes with, argues against and rejects criticism and blame.**

11. Standing firm

This is the nature of a mind which is not used to practising the Dhamma or has not met an exemplar. **You are oppressed by the worldly conditions. These worldly conditions flow over your head, like a strong current. A person is oppressed not only by loss but also by gains.** A person becomes a slave of gains. **A person who has become a slave of gains cries and laments over loss.** Moreover, s/he becomes a person who is unable to bear up the loss. This is the truth. However, a person who practises Dhamma and associates with an exemplar is

different. Such a person ponders on the nature of the worldly conditions. **The ability to ponder on the nature of the worldly conditions is so beautiful. Such a person is not oppressed by the worldly conditions but faces them. Facing the worldly conditions is different from getting oppressed by them.** Any gain lasts only for a short while. There will be a time when any gain turns into a loss, and any praise turns into a blame. This change over is possible in the next second or in another year. Praise does not stay as it is forever. Your health does not stay for 50 or 60 years as it is. We have no idea about these vicissitudes. Nobody can predict about these changes. **Even loss can turn into gains.** It is the same with scolding. Nobody can scold someone else all the time. **A person who can think in this manner stands firm in front of the worldly conditions. The worldly conditions exist but we can stand firm.** No gain makes such a person a slave. No loss can make such a person a fool, or oppress or control them. **A person who has had the influence of the Dhamma can meditate in front of the worldly conditions.**

The Lord Buddha preached clearly about different types of people. The difference can be seen in their reactions to worldly ups and downs. Here are the differences. Though we are born

as humans and are intelligent, just see how we react to the worldly conditions. Someone may become completely blinded by their emotions. Another may feel so helpless. Moreover, they may feel delighted while expressing their happiness by shouting, jumping etc. Another may lament. This lamenting and happily shouting is over something that is not going to last long. The other type of person does not react in an extreme way (with either depression or elation) no matter what happens. Both suffering and happiness disappear. We do not know how, when and where this is going to happen, **because both happiness and suffering are impermanent and are subject to change.**

12. The greatest way of living

When we think in this manner, it is possible for us to be in a state of equanimity. There is no greater way of living than being in a state of equanimity. Equanimity is much better than escaping. **Having faced the problem, having understood the problem and its nature, and living without getting agitated, is the greatest way of living.** Buddhism is for such living. Meditation is for such living, for nothing else but for facing life, the world, and duties and responsibilities.

In light of this, we come across situations associated with good and bad, ease and suffering, and praise and scolding. It is not possible to choose and filter, because the world is an entirety. Therefore, even if you separate a tiny particle from the world, that particle constitutes the entirety. Just take a magnet. It has two magnetic poles, the right pole and the left pole. We think that these two magnetic poles are located at the two edges of a magnet. If you break it into two, both pieces have both the poles. If you further break these into two pieces, all the broken pieces have both the magnetic poles. Even if you break a magnet into tiny particles, each particle has both the magnetic poles. **There is not a place where the worldly conditions do not exist.** Wherever you go, even if you live inside a small cave, the worldly conditions flow into the cave. Therefore, **face the worldly conditions instead of fleeing, understand instead of lamenting, and ponder instead of boasting. As a result, someone can live without getting agitated.** The Dhamma expects us to experience a life devoid of agitation in the midst of problems. Problems exist. There are remedial measures for problems. It is not necessary to be agitated. You can let go of unnecessary things and do what is necessary.

Dear Dhamma Friends, if you live in this manner, you get to experience a beautiful life. There is nothing more beautiful than living without being agitated. **If you can live without clinging to praise and resisting criticism, such living is the most beautiful living.** Nothing is more beautiful than such living.

13. Owing the unnecessary

We need to find out why we cannot live like that. It would be wonderful if we could live like that. Why cannot we? Because, we do not understand that the worldly conditions are merely incidents. **Praise is an incident, just something we hear, nothing else. Praise is an idea of somebody or the way that person thinks, nothing else. Scolding is also a sound, something you hear, and an idea of a person. There is nothing else.** However, we do not stop at that point, because we create 'I' while holding onto what we hear. We make all the incidents ours: "My profit, my loss." **Merely gain, loss, praise, humiliation etc. existed before we created 'I'. After creating 'I', an owner of gain, loss, praise, humiliation etc. exists.** Soon after the owner of praise appears, that praise turns into a piece of personal property. When we refer to personal property, we often think of houses, vehicles, furniture, pieces of land,

dresses etc. These things may be personal property. However, more than that, **we have made the worldly conditions our personal property, without knowing that these incidents belong to the world, not to us. We try to own the worldly conditions, each moment of gain and loss etc. That is a mistake we make.**

14. Non-existing ego

Many truth-seekers spoke about getting rid of the ego. Before Buddhism arose, many people were talking about ego and looked for ways of getting rid of it. Many methods such as living without eating and breathing, making the body suffer, punishing the body, and living without thinking had been followed for getting rid of ego. 'I' existed in all those exercises. As a result, 'I' was left. The body was worn out and the 'I' was left. The body fainted and the 'I' was left. Buddhism does not refer to getting rid of ego, but living without creating ego. Getting rid of ego is totally different from living without creating ego. **According to Buddhism, it is impossible to get rid of ego because there is nothing called ego. Ego does not exist. It is not possible to get rid of something that does not exist.** However, we can live without creating ego.

15. The most remarkable attributes

There is another story about a prince named Haththakalawaka. The Lord Buddha preached: “The prince Haththakalawaka has 7 remarkable attributes. The first remarkable attribute is his confidence (*saddhā*). The second is his virtuousness. The rest is moral shame, moral fear, generosity, being learned, and being wise. The Lord Buddha ended the discourse on these 7 remarkable attributes. Praising and assessing a person in his absence was something very rare. The monks who listened to this discourse felt like visiting Haththakalawaka. If someone praises another we may also feel like visiting that person. One of the monks visited Haththakalawaka and said: “The Lord Buddha made a statement about the remarkable attributes you have.” Then, Haththakalawaka questioned the monk: “Were there many people when the Lord Buddha made that statement? Especially, were there many laypersons?” The monk replied: “No, there were no laypersons.” Haththakalawaka replied: “If that is the case, it’s alright.” This monk went back and told the Lord Buddha: “Having heard the way you praised Haththakalawaka, I felt like visiting him. I told him about the seven remarkable attributes you preached

about. He asked me whether there were laypersons present at that time. I said, no, only monks.” Then, the Lord Buddha said: “Haththakalawaka does not like publicity. That is the 8th remarkable attribute. Haththakalawaka is not a person who creates ego by holding onto these remarkable attributes.”

16. The basic reasons for suffering

We create ego by holding onto something. We can also live without creating ego. However, we create ego because of our foolishness. Someone can create ego based on confidence: “I am a person having confidence.” On the contrary, someone can live without creating ego. Suppose you create ego based on confidence. Afterwards, if another praises you about your confidence, you feel happy and cling to that confidence. Similarly, if someone says that you have not developed any confidence, then you clash with that person. If someone says that there are people with more confidence better than you, then you feel jealous. **It is not possible to create ego without these three feelings: happiness, conflict and jealousy.**

It is same with virtue. Suppose you do not steal at all. You can create ego based on the virtue, “abstaining from stealing.” If

someone praises you saying that you are a nice and honest person who never steals anything, then you cling to that praise and feel proud. **The moment you cling to praise, you become a slave of praise.** You become a person who lives on praise. Praise becomes your breath. **You become a person who is able to live without breath, but not without praise.** If someone says that you are only pretending to be a person who does not steal anything, then you clash with that person. It is impossible to create ego without clashing. If someone says that there is another person who is more virtuous than you, then you feel jealous. This is the truth. Virtue is not the fault, but the ego created based on virtue.

We create three subtle mental feelings known as ‘ahankara, mamankara, and manasha.’ **Ahankara refers to a doer of something; distributing mail, playing a violin, and so on. A person who plays the violin creates an ‘I’ with regard to what s/he does, which is known as mamankara: “I distribute mail; I play the violin etc.” The creation of ‘I’ causes thoughts such as ‘my work, my things, my attributes’ etc. to arise, which is known as manasha.** As a result, we tend to consider ourselves to be distinct from others, which is the real problem in life. The

creation of ego is a result of 'ahankara, mamankara, and manasha.'

These subtle mental feelings are the basic reasons for suffering and the saṃsāric journey. We do not create ego intentionally. As these mental feelings are so subtle, they just form. **Ego that we create based on wrong/bad things is obvious. Ego that we create based on good things is not obvious.** When you are puffed up with ego created based on bad things, others criticize you and the whole society insults you. When you are puffed up with ego created based on good things, others honour you. Therefore, it is difficult to see that you are puffed up with ego created based on good things. However, we ought to see the ego created based on good things. Therefore, Buddhism says: "Do good things. **But do not create ego through the good deeds, because such ego is the cause of suffering.**" Though you do good things, you are not happy because of ego that you have created. Though you tell the truth, you are not happy because you have created the ego called 'truth-teller.' You expect others to accept that you are a truth-teller. However, some do not accept that. As a result, you feel sad.

17. Faultless living

Dear Dhamma Friends, virtue is extremely valuable. A person can live without committing any wrong deeds due to many reasons. The first reason is fear. There is fear of getting punished by the law. Therefore, someone does not want to do anything wrong. Even if the law does not punish a person, the fear of having to be punished by kamma (action and the result of action) exists. You may also fear those who you respect and honour being disgusted with you and fear losing them. Often we fear criticism. Whatever the reason, it is good if we live without committing anything wrong. However, according to Buddhism, **living without committing anything wrong is not enough to end this saṃsāra or to attain nibbana.**

Someone may do good things expecting others' honour, the good results of kamma, or to be born in a happy realm. 'I' exists whether we do good things or bad things. Then, someone may wonder whether it is alright to do bad things and not to do good things. That should not be the way. Why should not we do wrong things? Do such things harm another? **See the bad effects of doing wrong things on others. Committing something wrong harms another. Therefore, such an act is**

called a wrong act. See the harm and let go of committing anything wrong. No need to bring 'oneself' to that point. Someone can give up all the wrong acts one by one without creating ego. There is no need of ego. **If any act harms another, just let go of that.** 'I' does not exist. If any act does well to another, continue with that act. **That is virtue devoid of self (*sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi*).** **Buddhism emphasizes such virtue or faultless living without creating ego.** Such virtue is so beautiful and radiant. **A person having such virtue does not compare themselves with another: whether someone is more virtuous, more generous, and more knowledgeable than me. There is no measuring, no comparison, and no ego.**

18. Unshakable living

These mental feelings such as 'ahankara, mamankara, and manasha' are so subtle, unlike anger and greediness which are very obvious. No matter how subtle these feelings are, they are the cause of all the problems, unrest, and clashes. They are associated with good and bad, comfort and suffering, virtuousness and immorality. **We need the Dhamma to live without creating ahankara, mamankara and manasha. Unlimited freedom and peaceful joy exist at any moment in a**

mind that does not create ahankara, mamankara and manasha by holding onto something good or bad, comfort or suffering, praise or humiliation, and gain or loss. Such peaceful joy cannot be ruined by another by scolding or praising, **because there is no person to accept scolding or praise. Only a person who sees the nature of scolding and praise exists. Such a person sees that both scolding and praise do not last long and are subject to change. It is the same with humiliation. That is the nature of the world.** There is no creation of a doer or an owner or ego. A moment is created when the storms or hurricanes known as the worldly conditions fail to unsettle/confuse us. The ultimate goal of this entire effort is to attain that freedom, peaceful joy, and liberation, which is in our own hands, not in anybody else's hands. We are born with all the necessary road kits for this journey. We were born in this world to take on this journey. We have come here to take on this journey. When we look at all these things, we feel encouraged, enthusiastic and thrilled. Let's make the effort to end the suffering we create, and also not to create suffering again.

May the Triple Gem Bless You!!!