

**Dhamma Talk**  
**(Dēsanā) by**

The Most Venerable  
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## 2. Wholesome Mental Qualities

*Namo tassa Bhagavato, Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa.*

Homage to that Blessed one, who is an Arahant and perfectly  
Self-enlightened.

*Mano-pubbangamā dhammā mano-setthā mano-mayā,  
Manasā cē pasannena bhāsati vā karoti vā,  
Tato nam sukhamanvēti chāyāva anapāyini.*

(Dh. 2)

Mind precedes [all] mental qualities, mind is their chief, [they are] mind-made, if with an exalted mind one [thinks,] speaks or acts, happiness follows him like a never departing shadow.

Faithful Devotees, you are perhaps familiar with the above Pāli quotation, which is the second verse in the *Yamaka-vagga* (the pairs [of verses] or twin [verses] chapter) of the Dhammapada, taught by the Buddha, the perfectly Self-enlightened One. With the speaking of this verse there resulted in the realization of nibbāna by as many as 84,000 individuals.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dh.2 Comm.

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*Mano-pubbangamā dhammā* [all] mental qualities, whether wholesome or unwholesome, are preceded or marshalled by the mind

*Mano-setṭhā* mind is the chief of these mental qualities

*Mano-mayā* because of the mind they come into being

*Manasā cē pasannēna* if with a pure and clear mind

*Bhāsati vā* [one] speaks [it is a wholesome utterance]

*Karoti vā* or acts [it is a wholesome act]

*Tato nam sukhamanvēti* will follow pleasurable results both mundane and supramundane<sup>2</sup>

*Chāyāva anapayinī* as would one's own shadow

This is a very lucid Dhamma verse. If we leave aside the physical form (*rūpa*) we have within us two dhammas, namely mind (*citta*) and mental qualities (*cētasikas*). Mind is naturally one, however in the case of mental qualities there are fifty-two defined [in the Abhidhamma and Commentaries]. Fourteen of them are unwholesome (*akusala*) and directly cause a defiled state of the mind. There are a further thirteen mental qualities, called ethically variables (*anna-samāna* lit. the same as the other, those mental qualities which arise in both the wholesome as well as unwholesome), which support the fourteen unwholesome qualities mentioned above.

Twenty-five mental qualities are of a wholesome nature in every respect and are referred to as the 'beautifuls' (*sobhanas*). The thirteen *anna-samāna cētasikas* also support the twenty-five beautifuls, thus adding up to thirty-eight wholesome and twenty-seven unwholesome

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<sup>2</sup> Supramundane results come when the thirty-seven dhammas that lead to enlightenment are developed; all wholesome actions lead to pleasant mundane results.

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qualities. So there are, altogether, twenty-five directly wholesome and fourteen directly unwholesome qualities, in addition to the thirteen that support either the wholesome or unwholesome.

The mind precedes all mental qualities and is their chief. Defilement or purity of mind is not due to any external agency, but due to arising of the above-mentioned *cētasikas*. The verse, which is the topic of this discourse, describes the purifying of the mind. How does the purifying of the mind occur? It is due to the arising of twenty-five beautiful as well as thirteen *anna-samāna* mental qualities. As a result of the purification of the mind by the mind marshalling beautiful mental qualities, creating greatness of mind, there is peace of mind. This purified mind leads one to mundane happiness's, such as worldly pleasures & higher planes of existence, and also to the supramundane attainments, i.e. the four paths & fruits and nibbāna, without causing any discomfort or displeasure like one's own shadow.

There are altogether twenty-five beautiful *cētasikas*.<sup>3</sup> Nineteen of them are called universally beautiful (*sobhana-sādhārana* lit. shared with [all] the beautifuls) *cētasikas*:

- *Saddhā* - faith
- *Sati* - mindfulness
- *Hiri* - conscience, shame to do evil
- *Ottappa* - fear of blame from others
- *Alobha* - non-greed
- *Adosa* - non-anger
- *Tatra-majjhataṭṭā* - even-mindedness
- *Kāya-passaddhi* - tranquillity of the body [(group) of *cētasikas*]
- *Citta-passaddhi* - tranquillity of mind
- *Kāya-lahutā* - lightness of the body [(group) of *cētasikas*]
- *Citta-lahutā* - lightness of mind
- *Kāya-mudutā* - suppleness of the body [(group) of *cētasikas*]

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<sup>3</sup> See AS.II:5Ÿ8; for the nineteen universally beautiful *cetasikas* see AS.II:5.

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- *Citta-mudutā* - suppleness of mind
- *Kāya-kammannatā* - workability of the body [(group) of *cētasikas*]
- *Citta-kammannatā* - workability of mind
- *Kāya-pāgunnatā* - proficiency of the body [(group) of *cētasikas*]
- *Citta-pāgunnatā* - proficiency of mind
- *Kāyujukatā* - uprightness of the body [(group) of *cētasikas*]
- *Cittujukatā* - uprightness of mind

The three abstinences (*tisso viratiyo*<sup>4</sup>):

- *Sammā-vācā* - right speech
- *Sammā-kammanta* - right action
- *Sammā-ājīva* - right livelihood

The [two] unlimiteds (*appamannāyo*<sup>5</sup>):

- *Karunā* - compassion
- *Muditā* - [sympathetic] joy

The last beautiful *cetasika* is the predominance of wisdom (*paññindriya*<sup>6</sup>).

Here we have to seek advice and examine how these mind marshalled mental qualities keep the mind purified. The advice, as taught by the lord Buddha, is to practise wise attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*). The practicing of *yoniso-manasikāra* enables one to maintain an undefiled mind in the presence of any internal, external,

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<sup>4</sup> In mundane consciousnesses the three abstinences occur only at the time of refraining from the three respective forms of misconduct (AS.II:6).

<sup>5</sup> These two correspond to the divine abidings (*brahma-vihāras*) of the same name; the other two divine abidings, i.e. loving-kindness (*mettā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*), are taken as specific modes of non-anger (*adosa*) and even-mindedness (*tatra-majjhataṭṭā*) respectively (AS.II:7).

<sup>6</sup> AS.II:8.

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physical or mental object. What helps us to develop *yoniso-manasikāra*? Listening to the Buddha's Teachings, which explain the conventional truth (*sammuti-sacca*) and ultimate truth (*paramattha-sacca*), helps us to develop *yoniso-manasikāra* because it teaches us to:

- Distinguish between wholesome actions (*kusala-kamma*) and unwholesome actions (*akusala-kamma*).
- Understand what leads to higher or lower realms of existence.
- Realise the cause of suffering and happiness in this life and hereafter.

Association with noble people (*kalyāna mittas* lit. good friends or *sappurisas* lit. true men) creates opportunities for one to hear the Dhamma. A noble person is one whose thought processes are deeply embedded in non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion. Such a person's thoughts, speech and actions are restrained; they do not cause any mental or physical harm to anyone in the world, but rather bring peace and happiness to the world. A person with such qualities, who is not given to greed, hatred and delusion, is called a noble person. It is from these noble people that we can learn the Dhamma. Therefore, the noblest of them all is the Buddha, next in order are:

- *Agga-sāvakas* - the [Buddha's two] chief disciples
- *Asāti mahā-sāvakās* - the [Buddha's] eighty great disciples
- *Arahant* - a fully enlightened one
- *Anāgāmi* - a non-returner
- *Sakadāgāmi* - a once-returner
- *Sotāpanna* - a stream-enterer
- *Ti-pitaka-dhara* - one well versed in the three divisions [of the Pāli canon] (*Ti-pitaka* lit. three baskets)
- *Dvi-pitaka-dhara* - one well versed in two divisions [of the Pāli canon]
- *Eka-pitaka-dhara* - one well versed in one division [of the Pāli canon]
- *Bahussuta* - one who has learnt (lit. heard) much [Dhamma]

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- Anyone who has faith (*saddhā*) in the Buddha, Dhamma & Sangha, is morally well behaved (*sīlavā*), is learned (*sutavā* - lit. has heard), is generous (*cāgavā*) and has wisdom (*paññavā*)<sup>7</sup>

Any of the above can be classified as noble people.<sup>8</sup> Association with such noble people (*sappurisa-sanseva*) and listening to the True-dhamma<sup>9</sup> (*saddhammasavana*), spoken by them, leads us to become familiar with wise attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*). The practice of *yoniso-manasikāra* results in maintaining a pure mind during all situations that are encountered, for example:

- The practice of loving kindness (*mettā*) in the presence of objects that can cause anger (*kodha*).
- Control of lust (*rāga*) in the presence of the objects of sensual pleasures.
- Being humble in situations where conceit (*māna*) could arise.

The practice of *yoniso-manasikāra* leads to the ability to change unwholesome thoughts to wholesome thoughts. What happens by the development of *yoniso-manasikāra*? Every activity is endowed with the highest quality of practicing according to the dhamma (*dhammānudhamma-patipatti*)<sup>10</sup>. The thoughts, speech and actions are then in keeping with the dhamma.

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<sup>7</sup> At A.8:54 someone with these qualities is called a *kalyāna-mitta*, though being learned is not mentioned there it is implied, for example c.f. A.4:186, where the Buddha says that even if someone should understand the meaning (*attha*) and Dhamma in a four line verse and is practising in accordance with the Dhamma it is enough to call them a *bahussuta*.

<sup>8</sup> Concerning *sappurisa* see also A.4:200-206.

<sup>9</sup> The True-dhamma (*Saddhamma*), also called the Dhamma of the noble ones (*Ariya-dhamma* (D.18)), is a synonymous term for Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha; another term synonymous to this is '*Sāsana*' (c.f. Dh.183), which is a verbal noun from '*sāsati*' (to teach), and from this there is the agent noun '*Satthā*', used referring to the Buddha, meaning 'Teacher'.

<sup>10</sup> The association with noble people, listening to the True-dhamma, wise attention and practicing according to the Dhamma are said, by the Buddha, to

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What is dhamma? What is *anudhamma*? Dhamma [in this context] is the four paths & fruits and nibbāna, which are the nine supramundane states (*lokuttara-dhammas*). The *Anudhamma*[s] are the [thirty seven] dhammas that lead to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya dhammas*<sup>11</sup>), i.e. leading to the four paths & fruits and nibbāna [when practiced].

Giving alms, living with integrity, meditating, respecting elders, being of service to others, sharing merits, rejoicing in the merits acquired by others, listening to the Dhamma, teaching Dhamma and developing right understanding<sup>12</sup> (lit. straightening one's views), practicing the ten wholesome courses of action,<sup>13</sup> developing the ten perfections (*dasa pārami*<sup>14</sup>), practicing the four divine abidings

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lead to the attaining of the fruit of stream-entry (S.55:55), fruit of once-returning (S.55:56), fruit of non-returning (S.55:57) and the fruit of Arahantship (S.55:58) when developed and made much of. At A.4:248 they are said to lead to increasing wisdom. See also A.10:61.

<sup>11</sup> For this explanation of *dhamma* see D.16 Comm., and for '*anudhamma*' see S.12:51 Comm. At C.Nidd. (to Sn.69) *dhamma*[s] are said to be the four presences of mindfulness, □ and the noble eight-fold path; *anudhammas* are said to include the practices that are prerequisites to the four presences of mindfulness, etc., i.e. fulfilling the moral standards (*sīla*), guarding the doors of the [sense] predominances (*indriya-sanvara*), knowing the [right] amount in regard to eating food (*bhojana-mattannutā*), being devoted to wakefulness (*jāgariyānuyoga*) and mindfulness & clear comprehension (*satisampajanna*).

<sup>12</sup> These ten practices are called the ten bases for making merit (*dasa punnakiriyā-vatthāni*). D.33 only mentions the first three, the full set of ten are found at D.33 Comm.

<sup>13</sup> That is abstaining from killing living beings (and being compassionate), abstaining from taking what has not been given, abstaining from engaging in sexual misconduct, abstaining from uttering false speech, abstaining from speaking to cause division (and speak for the sake of harmony), abstaining from speaking harshly (and speak what is blameless, dear and goes to the heart), abstaining from uttering useless speech (and speak what is timely and beneficial), giving up covetousness, giving up ill-will and having right view (M.41).

<sup>14</sup> They are as follows: giving (*dāna*), being moral (*sīla*), renunciation (*nekkhamma*), wisdom (*paññā*), energy (*virīya*), patience (*khanti*), truthful-

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(*brahma-vihāras*<sup>15</sup>), perfect the four bases for beneficence (*cattāri sangaha-vatthāni*<sup>16</sup>), become endowed with the *karaṇīya* and *mangala* dhammas<sup>17</sup> develops the [thirty-seven] *bodhipākkhiya dhammas* which lead us to the four paths & fruits and nibbāna.

From this discourse it is clear to us that maintaining a purified mind, though appearing to be very difficult to do, is not really so difficult if we associate with noble people, listen to Dhamma and practice *yoniso-manasikāra*. This constitutes the practice of right speech, right thought and right action, which in turn is living according to dhamma. This creates in our minds the [wholesome] thoughts that result in actions according to *manasā cē pasannēna*, and that leads to *tato nam sukhamanvētī*, which means bringing mundane happiness in this world and higher realms according to the conventional truth, and the four paths & fruits and nibbāna according to the ultimate truth.

Association with noble people, which affords the opportunity to listen to Dhamma, practice *yoniso-manasikāra* and live according to the Dhamma, results in attaining the respective states of all the Buddhas, Paccēkabuddhas, Arahants and Ariyan people. We at present in this period, when the Teachings of the Buddha (*Buddha-sāsana*) are still available, are blessed with opportunities for associating with noble people, listening to Dhamma, practicing *yoniso-manasikāra* and living according to Dhamma. As a result of this we shall enjoy in this life mental happiness, physical well-being, a

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ness (*sacca*), determination (*adhithhāna*), loving-kindness (*mettā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) (Bv.1 verses 76, 77).

<sup>15</sup> These are loving-kindness (*mettā* lit. friendliness), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) sometimes also called the four immeasurables (*catasso appamannā*) (D.33; see also Vism. IX,1-124).

<sup>16</sup> A.4:32 & A.9:5 *Ā* giving (*dāna*), [using] kind/dear speech (*peyya-vajja*), lit. living for the benefit [of others] (*attha-cariyā*) and treating all equally (*samānattatā*).

<sup>17</sup> I.e. the qualities mentioned in the Karaṇīyamettāsutta (Kh.9 & Sn.143-152) and Mahāmagalasutta (Kh.5 & Sn.258-269). For the text and translation of these see Appendix I, p. \_\_.



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pleasant environment to live in, pleasant people to associate with and fulfil our wishes.

However, our ultimate aim is not to be attached to such mundane pleasures in this world, the world of the deities (*devas*) or brahmās, but rather to purify our minds in successive births and follow the path of the Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas & Arahants and realize the four paths & fruits and Nibbàna.

