



Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

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March 2024 Newsletter



Perfection of Renunciation (nekkhamma pāramī)

The perfections (pāramīs) are a set of ten virtues that are cultivated in order to progress on the path to nibbāna, liberation from suffering (dukkha). An overview of the Ten Perfections are presented in the January 2024 Newsletter: The Perfection of Giving (dāna pāramī). The Ten Perfections (pāramīs) are:

1. Giving (dāna pāramī),
2. Virtue (sīla pāramī),
3. Renunciation (nekkhamma pāramī),
4. Wisdom (paññā pāramī),
5. Energy (vīrya pāramī),
6. Patience (khanti pāramī),
7. Truthfulness (saccā pāramī),
8. Determination (adhiṭṭhāna pāramī),
9. Loving-Kindness (mettā pāramī), and
10. Equanimity (upekkhā pāramī).

The subject of this newsletter is on the Perfection of Renunciation (nekkhamma pāramī). The Perfection of Giving (dāna pāramī) is discussed in the January 2024 Newsletter and the Perfection of Virtue (sīla pāramī) is discussed in the February 2024 Newsletter. The next seven newsletters will discuss the remaining perfections.

Renunciation is the mind's wholesome intention to reject, disown or relinquish something unwholesome. The skilled and wholesome mind is committed to the training that leads to liberation from attachment to sensual desires and cravings because attachment to possessions and sensual pleasures result in suffering (dukkha) and detachment from them will result in freedom from suffering. Renunciation is letting go of whatever keeps the mind bound by the defilements (kilesa) of ignorance (avijjā), greed (lobha), and hatred (dosā); and relinquishes that which continues to cause suffering and existence in the cycle of birth, ageing, sickness, death, and rebirth (saṃsāra).

All things in the world, whether they be material or immaterial, are impermanent (anicca) and the mind that clings to or identifies with anything that is impermanent will suffer due to the item's changing, decaying and disappearing nature. Material items are the sense organs, objects of the senses and the associated pleasures; these items are impermanent, they are born, change and disappear. Immaterial items are views, concepts, opinions, thoughts, emotions, feelings, and perceptions; these items are also impermanent, they are born, change and disappear. The virtue of renunciation is cultivated by not clinging to or identifying with any material or immaterial item. Freedom from craving and clinging to that which is impermanent results in liberation from suffering and the realization of nibbāna.

Due to the impermanent nature of sensual pleasures and also due to the unwholesome mind's addiction to pleasures, the mind is never satisfied with available pleasures and is constantly searching for more and more pleasures. The sense of lack, not having enough pleasure causes the mind to perpetually search for greater pleasures. The temporary pleasurable experiences results in the urge to seek even more pleasures, and to try in vain to possess and protect those experiences. The experience of lack and fear of loss drives the mind to madness and suffers greatly. Renunciation is the antidote to the madness.

In addition to renouncing the addiction to sensual pleasures, the wholesome mind also renounces the concept of a self or ego which results in liberating wisdom that uproots the defilements. The Buddha defined a self as that which is permanent and not impermanent, and a self must also have complete control and power over that which is perceived to be a self. The teaching of not-self (anattā) is the understanding that the personality is composed of the Five Clinging Aggregates which are all impermanent and there is no complete control and power over the aggregates, therefore the aggregates are not a self. The Five Clinging Aggregates (pañcupādānakkhandhā) are the components that make up the experience of self and the world.

1. Material form (rūpa khandha) is the physical aspect of existence, the body and the external world perceived through the senses.
2. Feeling (vedanā khandha) is the sensations that are experienced in response to sensual stimuli. Feelings can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.
3. Perception (saññā khandha) is recognition and labeling of the sense objects that also include mental phenomena. Perception identifies and categorizes objects based on past knowledge and conditioning.
4. Mental formations (saṅkhāra khandha) include thoughts, emotions, volitions, and any mental construct. Mental formations encompasses everything that arises in the mind, including desires, intentions, and reactions.
5. Sense consciousness (viññāṇa khandha) is the awareness or cognizance of sensory experiences.

There are three levels of renunciation.

1. External renunciation is a mind that lets go of, does not hold on to, objects of the senses, sensual pleasures, and possessions.
2. Internal renunciation is a mind free of craving, clinging, attachment and identification with external sense objects.
3. Liberating renunciation is a mind free of defilements and the wrong view (micchādiṭṭhi) related to the personality or ego as being a self, this wisdom (paññā) is developed through insight meditation (vipassanā). The mind that is in the process of purification of defilements will hold onto right views (sammādiṭṭhi) but not wrong views; right views are the raft that takes the mind across the river of saṃsāra, once on the other side, the raft (right views) is also let go of.

The practice of renunciation is not to deny the necessities for physical and emotional survival but rather to develop contentment and non-attachment towards the basic necessities. The cultivation of contentment is being satisfied with the possessions that one already has, and the understanding that peace and happiness doesn't come from accumulating material possessions or chasing after sensual pleasures. A simple and minimalist lifestyle may help in developing contentment with basic needs.

The development of mental and emotional detachment is the process of observing thoughts and emotions (contents of consciousness) without getting entangled in them through understanding their impermanent and not-self nature. Contents of consciousness, the Five Aggregates, are like clouds passing through the mind. When the clouds (contents) settle down, the radiant and luminosity of the sun (consciousness) will be able to appear without obstruction.

Sincerity and committing to the training of mind for the liberation from suffering is to prioritize the development of virtues defined by the Ten Perfections (pāramī) over material gain, fame, praise or sensual pleasures. By perfecting the virtue of renunciation, the mind grows in freedom from the cycle of suffering (saṃsāra) by gradually reducing the influence of craving, clinging and attachments. The perfection of renunciation is a condition that develops a mind that is tranquil, compassionate, and concentrated on the goal of liberation (nibbāna).

Renunciation is one of the three kinds of Right Intention (sammā-saṅkappa), the second link of the Noble Eightfold Path. Right Intention are wholesome thoughts, defined in negative terms:

1. thoughts of renunciation and detachments to sense pleasures (nekkhamma vitakka),
2. thoughts of non-ill will (abyāpāda vitakka), and
3. thoughts of non-cruelty (avihiṃsā vitakka).

Renunciation leads naturally to generosity, Right Intention defined in positive terms:

1. thoughts of generosity (dāna vitakka),
2. thoughts of loving-kindness (metta vitakka), wishing others well and
3. thoughts of providing protection to living beings and radiating compassion (karunā vitakka).

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi
141 Saccavibhanga Sutta: The Exposition of the Truths

... 25. "And what, friends, is right intention? Intention of renunciation, intention of non-ill will, and intention of non-cruelty — this is called right intention.

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi
19 Dvedhāvitakka Sutta

... 3. "As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of sensual desire arose in me. I understood thus: 'This thought of sensual desire has arisen in me. This leads to my own affliction, to others' affliction, and to the affliction of both; it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from Nibbāna.' When I considered: 'This leads to my own affliction,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This leads to others' affliction,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This leads to the affliction of both,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from Nibbāna,' it subsided in me. Whenever a thought of sensual desire arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it.

... 6. "Bhikkhus, whatever a bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of sensual desire, he has abandoned the thought of renunciation to cultivate the thought of sensual desire, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of sensual desire. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of ill will... upon thoughts of cruelty, he has abandoned the thought of non-cruelty to cultivate the thought of cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of cruelty.

The Perfection of Renunciation (nekkhamma pāramī) is balanced and assisted by the other perfections.

- Renunciation (nekkhamma) is balanced by the perfection of patience (khanti) because patience allows the mind to endure and manage the challenges that arise when relinquishing attachments.
- Selflessness and letting go of impermanent phenomena, supreme states of the Noble Ones, are developed with the renunciation of attachments and the Perfection of Generosity (dāna pāramī). Renunciation is letting go and generosity is sharing, together they form a skill to tame the ignorant ego into submission, and to cultivate selflessness and not-self. The motivation in renunciation is to let go with nothing expected in return is also necessary to perfect generosity.
- Renunciation must be guided by the Perfection of Wisdom (paññā pāramī) in order to avoid aversion to the world. Renunciation is balanced with wisdom through the understanding that the wholesome mind can engage with the world without attachment or identification.

Without wisdom, renunciation may be driven by negative emotions like fear, frustration, or disappointment. Escape mentality is to push away the world without understanding the dangers inherent in the world. Aversion creates internal conflict, making renunciation difficult to maintain in the long run. The mind that lacks sufficient wisdom craves what it repels, leading to frustration and potential relapse.

- An unwise mind will reject all sensual pleasures, possessions, or relationships and try to exist in total isolation due to the wrong view that happiness and peace will be experienced when there is absolutely no relationship with anything or anyone; such a mind is paranoid and has a fear of the world. The wise mind will instead engage in the world with wisdom, partakes of sensual pleasures, possessions and relationships without craving, attachment, grasping, holding on or identifying with those items.
- An unwise mind that is experiencing challenges of daily life, stress, conflicts, and disappointments will attempt to escape from the suffering by withdrawing through radical renunciation and not engaging with life. The wise mind engages with both uncomfortable and comfortable feelings with the understanding that they arise, change and fall away due to impermanent conditions, and the wise mind does not hold onto or identify with any feelings.
- An unwise mind that is disappointed with failure to gain material possessions, fame or recognition will renounce the world in order to avoid depression associated with the loss of identifying with

those items and the deterioration of the ego. The wise mind does not identify with material possessions, fame or recognition and is not disappointed when they fail to arise or when they disappear.

- The unwise mind does not understand the gradual process that is inherent of the path towards liberation from suffering, nibbāna, and will renounce the world too quickly and to a degree that results in an unhealthy and unbalanced mind, which is an obstacle in transversing the path. The wise mind understands the training to be gradual, and knows when and what to renounce; the trainee will consult with spiritual friends who have experience with renunciation.
- The unwise mind will attempt to practice extreme asceticism and renounce the body, jeopardizing physical survival is a wrong understanding of renunciation. The wise mind understands the Buddha's teaching of the Middle Way and not train with extreme asceticism nor indulge in sensual gratification. The Middle Way is to balance renunciation with engagement in the world.
- The unwise mind that is seeking radical transformation or a dramatic break from their past, a desire for a profound shift in identity and lifestyle, will practice extreme renunciation. The wise mind rests in the understanding of not-self, stillness, silence, and peace, and does not seek any identity.

Renunciation is a conscious choice, releasing the mind from the grip of craving and clinging, resulting in freedom and liberation, based on understanding the impermanence and unsatisfactoriness of worldly phenomena, without denying and punishing the mind or withdrawing from the world.

With wisdom, the mind develops the Perfection of Equanimity (upekkhā pāramī), an evenness of mind towards pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Aversion gives way to understanding and compassion for the inevitable suffering inherent in existence.

The presence of wisdom enables the mind to understand the benefits of renunciation and also to know what, when and how to let go. The world is not seen as an enemy, but an opportunity for practicing wisdom and compassion. Cultivating wisdom is the guiding light for renunciation: wisdom transforms renunciation from a negative act of avoidance into a positive path towards liberation.

The following sutta passages are some teachings by the Buddha related to renunciation.

The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom translated by Acharya Buddhārakkhita

181. Those wise ones who are devoted to meditation and who delight in the calm of renunciation – such ones, Supreme Buddhas, even the gods hold dear.

290. If by renouncing a lesser happiness one may realize a greater happiness, let the wise man renounce the lesser, having regard for the greater happiness.

The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi
6.63 (9) Penetrative

... (1) "When it was said: 'Sensual pleasures should be understood; the source and origin of sensual pleasures should be understood; the diversity of sensual pleasures should be understood; the result of sensual pleasures should be understood; the cessation of sensual pleasures should be understood; the way leading to the cessation of sensual pleasures should be understood,' for what reason was this said?"

"There are, bhikkhus, these five objects of sensual pleasure: forms cognizable by the eye that are wished for, desired, agreeable, pleasing, connected with sensual pleasure, tantalizing; sounds cognizable by the ear ... odors cognizable by the nose ... tastes cognizable by the tongue ... tactile objects cognizable by the body that are wished for, desired, agreeable, pleasing, connected with sensual pleasure, tantalizing. However, these are not sensual pleasures; in the Noble One's discipline, these are called 'objects of sensual pleasure.' A person's sensual pleasure is lustful intention.

"They are not sensual pleasures, the pretty things in the world:

a person's sensual pleasure is lustful intention;
the pretty things remain just as they are in the world,
but the wise remove the desire for them.

"And what, bhikkhus, is the source and origin of sensual pleasures? Contact is their source and origin.

"And what is the diversity of sensual pleasures? Sensual desire for forms is one thing, sensual desire for sounds is another, sensual desire for odors still another, sensual desire for tastes still another, and sensual desire for tactile objects still another. This is called the diversity of sensual pleasures.

"And what is the result of sensual pleasures? One produces an individual existence that corresponds with whatever [sense pleasures] one desires and which may be the consequence either of merit or demerit.¹⁴¹³ This is called the result of sensual pleasures.

“And what is the cessation of sensual pleasures? With the cessation of contact there is cessation of sensual pleasures.

“This noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of sensual pleasures, namely, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

“When, bhikkhus, a noble disciple thus understands sensual pleasures, the source and origin of sensual pleasures, the diversity of sensual pleasures, the result of sensual pleasures, the cessation of sensual pleasures, and the way leading to the cessation of sensual pleasures, he understands this penetrative spiritual life to be the cessation of sensual pleasures.

“When it was said: ‘Sensual pleasures should be understood ... the way leading to the cessation of sensual pleasures should be understood,’ it is because of this that this was said.

Note:1413: Mp: “One desiring celestial sensual pleasures, by fulfilling good conduct, is reborn in the deva world [and acquires] an individual existence that is a consequence of merit. By engaging in misconduct, one is reborn in the plane of misery [and acquires] an individual existence that is a consequence of demerit.”

The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi
9.41 (10) Tapussa

... (1) “Before my enlightenment, while I was just a bodhisatta, not yet fully enlightened, it occurred to me too: ‘Good is renunciation, good is solitude.’ Yet my mind did not launch out upon renunciation and become placid, settled, and liberated in it, though I saw it as peaceful. It occurred to me: ‘Why is it that my mind does not launch out upon renunciation and become placid, settled, and liberated in it, though I see it as peaceful?’ Then it occurred to me: ‘I have not seen the danger in sensual pleasures and have not cultivated that [insight]; I have not achieved the benefit in renunciation and have not pursued it. Therefore my mind does not launch out upon renunciation and become placid, settled, and liberated in it, though I see it as peaceful.’

“Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me: ‘If, having seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I would cultivate that [insight], and if, having achieved the benefit in renunciation, I would pursue it, it is then possible that my mind would launch out upon renunciation and become placid, settled, and liberated in it, since I see it as peaceful.’ Sometime later, having seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I cultivated that [insight], and having achieved the benefit in renunciation, I pursued it. My mind then launched out upon renunciation and became placid, settled, and liberated in it, since I saw it as peaceful.

“Sometime later, Ānanda, secluded from sensual pleasures ... I entered and dwelled in the first jhāna. While I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention accompanied by sensuality occurred in me and I felt it as an affliction. Just as pain might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict him, so too, when perception and attention accompanied by sensuality occurred in me, I felt it as an affliction.

The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi
5.200 (10) Escape

... (1) “Here, when a bhikkhu is attending to sensual pleasures, his mind does not launch out upon them, and become placid, settled, and focused on them. But when he is attending to renunciation, his mind launches out upon it and becomes placid, settled, and focused on it. His mind is well departed, well developed, well emerged, well liberated, and well detached from sensual pleasures. And he is freed from those taints, distressful and feverish, that arise with sensual pleasures as condition. He does not feel that kind of feeling. This is declared to be the escape from sensual pleasures.

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi
14 Cūḷadukkhakkhandha Sutta: The Shorter Discourse on the Mass of Suffering

... 4. “Even though a noble disciple has seen clearly as it actually is with proper wisdom that sensual pleasures provide little gratification, much suffering and despair, and that the danger in them is still more, as long as he still does not attain to the rapture and pleasure that are apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or to something more peaceful than that, he may still be attracted to sensual pleasures.²⁰⁸ But when a noble disciple has seen clearly as it actually is with proper wisdom that sensual pleasures provide little gratification, much suffering and despair, and that the danger in them is still more, and he attains to the rapture and pleasure that are apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or to something more peaceful than that, then he is no longer attracted to sensual pleasures.

Note 208: The “rapture and pleasure that are apart from sensual pleasures” are the rapture and pleasure pertaining to the first and second jhānas; the states “more peaceful than that” are the higher jhānas. From this passage it seems that a disciple may attain even to the second path and fruit without possessing mundane jhāna.

The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi
55.37 (7) Mahānāma

... “Here, Mahānāma, a lay follower dwells at home with a mind devoid of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, open-handed, delighting in relinquishment, one devoted to charity, delighting in giving and sharing. In that way a lay follower is accomplished in generosity.”

Announcements

- Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center has a presence on Meet-Up social media and we ask that you please sign-up for every event that you are planning to attend at www.MeetUp.com. Some people are intimidated by a small number of attendees and a larger number will be encouraging.
- Please help advertise Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center by providing a review at www.google.com/maps.

Activities of the Meditation Center

- Sitting meditation is held everyday at 6:30AM and 5:30PM. After meditation, Ajahn Kumāro is available to answer questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com on the days and time you would like to participate.
- The days of the full moon, new moon and the two half moons are called in Pāli: The Uposatha, and is a Buddhist day of observance. A lunar calendar is available at <https://cal.forestsangha.org>. Ajahn Kumāro will perform the ceremony of giving the five precepts on the full and new moon days after the 5:30PM meditation. You may elect to keep the precepts as long as you see fit (one night, a week, a lifetime, etc).
- Meditation Workshop is held on the first Sunday of each month between 11:00AM and 1:00PM. The workshop will provide instruction and practice for sitting and walking meditation. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- A recording of a Dhamma Talk from an experienced Thai Forest Teacher will be played on the third Sunday of each month. Sitting meditation starts at 4:30PM and the Dhamma Talk will be played afterwards. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- Every Saturday at 4:15PM the Meditation Center will be cleaned. Please join us in maintaining a clean space for practicing and discussing the Dhamma.
- There is a Library at the Meditation Center. You may browse for books to borrow at 5:00PM and check out the books for three weeks.
- Everyday at 8:40AM Ajahn Kumāro leaves for alms-round in order to give residents of Asheville the opportunity to earn merit by practicing generosity of giving food and placing it into the alms bowl. Ajahn does not accept or handle money. Ajahn usually arrives at the Whole Foods Market, 70 Merrimon Ave. just before 9:00AM and stands in front of the store for alms.
- Ajahn is available at other times during the day to meet with individuals or groups when requested.
- For more additional information please send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com. We also have a presence on Facebook and Meet-Up social media.

Request for Support

The Meditation Center is in need of support in order to accomplish its' mission and vision. The support may take various forms. You will support the Meditation Center by:

- Being present at the Meditation Center for group meditation.
- Giving alms during alms-round.
- Bringing to the Meditation Center items that are listed on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com.
- Volunteering your skills, energy and time at the Meditation Center.
- Informing your family and friends about the Meditation Center and encouraging them to participate in the activities.
- Donating financial contributions for the Meditation Center's expenses. Kalyana-Mitta Meditation Center is recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS under section 501(c)(3). Donations are deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. Financial contributions may be made on the

support page of the website www.mittameditation.com and additional means for making financial donations may be discussed with Elisha Buhler at (910) 922-1549.