

BASED ON THE ARTICLE

## What One Wants to Do

Translated into English by

~ Bhikkhu Paññāgavesaka

( Mr. Myo Tun )

Edited by

~ Bhikkhu Suññātagavesaka

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## What One Wants to Do

The questions to be asked...

There are two questions that one needs to ask:

1. What does one want to do?
2. What is it that one is doing?

When one has the answer to those two questions they will know whether or not what they want to do and what they are doing are in agreement.

People need to know what it is they want to do along with what it is they are doing, in order to understand whether their actions and desires are in conformity or at variance with each other.

Each of us is at all times doing one thing or another. We see that there are those among us who are mainly engaged in worldly matters. Others are more involved with a combination of both worldly and religious concerns. And there are some whose main interest and purpose in life is liberation from the world of existence. Regardless of what

kind of activity we are engaged in, each person needs to know if they are in fact doing what they want to do. Some people are, but there are others who are not aware of whether their desired objectives are in accord with their actions.

Should we try to do what we want to do or should we strive to do what ought to be done? These are two important questions that also need to be asked. We discover, in answering them, that in order to do what we want to do we must first of all do what we should do. By doing what we should do, we fulfill the prerequisite for doing that which we want to do. We have to cultivate perseverance, tolerance and patience in order to really do that which we want to do. In other words, we have to train the mind.

### **The wishes of the mind**

As the Buddha once said, "*Cittena niyati loko.*" This means '*the mind is the leader of all beings.*' And, on another occasion the Buddha said, "*Let not your mind lead you, but let your mind be led by you.*" This is the purpose of training the mind. As the noble mind leads one into worthy realms, the ignoble mind leads one into lower realms. It is important, therefore, to know where we are headed. Are we on the road that leads to the deeper meaning and purpose of life, and is it the way leading to the fulfillment of our desired goals? One's objective must, at all times, be to lead the mind rather than to be led by the mind.

There will naturally be differing opinions about life, as long as there are people with contradictory objectives in life. One expects to find such differences amongst a wide-ranging cross-section of people. For our purposes, we ac-

knowledge that most people are different, but we are not concerned with their differences. There are others, however, whose objectives and perceptions are similar, if not the same. The similarity referred to here is one of essence. It is not a sameness in relative form or other kinds of external impressions. For example, monks wear robes. Externally, in appearance at least, they all look more or less alike. This sameness in visible form is not important. What is significant though is the similarity in *mind* essence that is aroused in monks. This fundamental similarity of mind essence is one of the most important goals of monasticism.

The exalted teachings of the Lord Buddha have been offered for the benefit of those with noble ambitions and for those aiming for true liberation. To be noble means to be cultured, honest, respectful, persevering, non-oppressive, benevolent, and sympathetic, to rejoice in the success of another and to maintain equanimity when equanimity is due. These are the qualities of nobility. If, subsequent to bhikkhu ordination, by heeding the teachings of the Lord Buddha, one aspires towards the attainment of nobility and develops morally, becomes highly dedicated and is gradually more inclined to renunciation, that is the essence of a monk. It is this that is important – not merely taking on the form and appearance of monasticism.

Differences in race, caste, wealth and affluence play no part in the real meaning of the Buddha's teachings. Such differentiation between people is rooted in bias and narrow-mindedness. These differences do not bring forth nobility in us nor can they help us make progress towards the goal of liberation.

The Lord Buddha created the Sangha solely for the well-being and benefit of those who, with determination, strive for liberation through noble practice in life. For that reason all disparities and distinctions in race, caste, stature and affluence have necessarily been eradicated within the Sangha. Those who enter the monkhood filled with magnanimity and faith, and free from prejudice, are en-route to their destination and goal – liberation. In the Sangha, all bhikkhus are equally venerated as monks of the Sakya clan. Their fellowship is one in which no discrimination is replaced by seniority and mutual respect.

On the march towards liberation, the course that we follow needs to be the same. Without following the same course, the ultimate goal cannot be the same.

Because we know that several Omniscient Buddhas formerly achieved the goal of enlightenment, we know that the way to enlightenment already exists. The distinctive feature here is that the way or course to enlightenment is the same. Those who share the goal of enlightenment, also discover that they share the same way or course to enlightenment – that noble way which one must adopt in order to reach that noble goal.

There is a state wherein the suffering of old age, illness, and death, as well as all other kinds of suffering cease to exist. There is, too, the practice and the course by which one can reach the yonder shore of Nibbāna where all forms of suffering completely cease to exist. This is called 'The Practice of the Eightfold Noble Path.' Nibbāna is accessible only when this practice and this course are in concurrence with each other. If these two do not accord, Nibbāna is unattainable. Nibbāna cannot be perceived by

anyone without following this practice and this course. We see in this practice and the pursuit of this course that one is, in fact, doing what ought to be done.

**To get the opportunity to do what one wants to do**

All those who practice accordingly are bound to reach the goal someday – sooner or later. Naturally, there will be individual differences in the length of time needed by different people to reach the goal. The final goal will be attained swiftly for those who have fulfilled the requirements of acquired virtues (*Pāramis*), and who have arrived at their last existence in the cycles of rebirth. We see that cultivating and fulfilling the acquired virtues really means doing what ought to be done. Therefore, it is imperative to be conscious of performing the deeds that ought to be done.

The practice of the Eightfold Noble Path may also be termed the practice of morality (*Sīla*), concentration (*Samādhi*) and wisdom (*Paññā*). For some, just trying to keep the precepts means that they are doing what ought to be done. Observance of the basic precepts is a necessary step that leads one towards right concentration. By taking that step, and then by developing their concentration, one is continuing to do what ought to be done in order to progress on to the practice of insight meditation and the cultivation of wisdom.

The desire to practice insight meditation, wherein one contemplates the three characteristics of conditioned things as impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anatta*), can only arise after one develops concentration. The perfection of concentration means here

that one is doing that which ought to be done. Because of concentration, one is eventually able to directly discern ultimate mentality and materiality. When one is able to discern ultimate mentality and materiality, they can practice insight meditation effectively. Only after insight knowledge matures can one realize the truly tranquil state of Nibbāna. Thus, to systematically develop the practices of *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā* means that one is ‘doing what ought to be done’ in order to reach the ultimate goal which is Nibbāna.

The only way to arrive at the ultimate goal is to make the powerful resolve to achieve one’s deepest desire and then to place that resolve in the forefront of one’s mind. When one acts motivated by this resolve they are, in effect, doing what ought to be done.

Human beings are in general doing what they ought to do in order to survive in society. But simply doing what needs to be done, in order to ‘survive’, does not mean that one is automatically then able to do what they want to do. This is because most people don’t yet have the opportunity to do what they really want to do.

Those who are practicing in order to be liberated are also doing what they need to do. They practice because of their deep desire to be liberated from existence, with the purpose of fulfilling that desire. This is doing exactly what ought to be done so that their desire is fulfilled. In this case, however, doing what ought to be done gives rise to what is desired. That is how it should be understood.

Obviously, the ‘wanting’ that arises from greed and covetousness is not the same as the ‘wanting’ that arises out of the desire for liberation.

**Aiming at the Objective**

The aspiration to do what one wants to do helps one take aim and have clear objectives and goals. It is like laying down a foundation and performing all the things that need to be done in order to build and reside in a huge and well-made mansion. Laying down the foundation though is not the actual beginning of doing what ought to be done. The prerequisites always come first. One must gather together all the necessary building materials in order to realize his objective. These prerequisites should be considered the beginning of doing what ought to be done. Those who have fulfilled their quota of acquired virtues (*i.e.*, *Pāramis*) are able to do what they want to do, all the while making rapid progress towards the goal. Beings of such good fortune are but few.

When primary preference is given to what one wants to do instead of doing what ought to be done, it becomes a hindrance that blocks the opportunity to do what we really want to do from arising. So, once again we see that it is imperative for us to do what ought to be done in order to satisfy our desire to do what we truly want to do.

Devadatta wished to become a Buddha, but rather than perfecting the virtues required to become a Buddha, he was driven by his appetite to do what he wanted to do. His own self-indulgent craving led to his downfall. It was a case of indulging the defilements of mind.

**Those who dare to forfeit their lives**

Many people forfeit their lives for the sake of worldly gain or for acceptance, praise, esteem and respect from others. Devadatta is an example of someone who forfeited

his life by following and acting upon his mind's defilements.

Are you doing that which in your heart is truly what you want to do or are you more motivated by the desire for esteem, honor, praise, respect, fame and wealth? One needs to be aware of the difference between these two reasons for wanting to do anything.

There are those who do not attend to their own true desires, but who are exceedingly concerned by the attitudes, views and opinions of others. Their yearning to be accepted, esteemed and understood leads to their demise. Sadly, far too many of us come to the end of the road by giving in to the wishes of others. This state of affairs is all too common in this world.

One cannot live in true peace and tranquility without knowing one's own true attitude and desires. Without the knowledge of one's own true attitude and desires, life is worthless. As long as one is ignorant of what one really wants to do, peace and stability of mind cannot be attained.

**The world seeking understanding**

A world in which people crave understanding and approval from others is a wearied world full of suffering. Humankind is wearing itself out in a vain attempt at unrelenting self-promotion, hoping for prominence and fame and for the fleeting enjoyments of this worldly abode. Countless lives are being forfeited, at an immense cost, because of this stupidity. All this is caused by ignorance and greed.

Greed has transformed people into beings who are ig-

norant about their own welfare. Striving to meet the demands of greed, they labor under the false impression that they are working for their own benefit. That is why the Lord Buddha said, “He with the distinct mark of greed is ignorant of what is beneficial to his welfare.” (*“Luddho attai na jānāti”*)

There are some who endeavor to maintain peace of mind. They truly want to lead worthwhile lives. The things in life that these people are inclined to want tend to be things that lead towards peace of mind. There are many others, however, who, though desirous of leading a worthy life, are unable to do so because of the defilement of greed. Such people are in great torment. Why are they in torment? Why is tranquility missing in their life? Unaware of the need to examine and understand the causes of their torment, they do not understand why tranquility is missing in their life. They need to look into those causes.

A person must be aware that he wants to do a particular thing. In the past, there were people who understood this. They consciously did what needed to be done for that very reason. There are people in the world today who also understand this, and there will be such people in the future, as well.

### **Sameness within the Differences**

In the effort to get along in the world, people have to find their own way to their own destination. Basically, most people are just fumbling along. It is not certain whether or not they will even arrive. Life provides no guarantees.

People are different; no two are alike. Each individual’s life journey is unique. However, we discover that there is

also sameness in our differences. How is this so? The ‘differences’ are found in a wide-ranging and seemingly infinite variety of human goals. On the other hand, there is ‘sameness’ in the qualities of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) that we commonly make use of on the journey to our different goals.

### **A Skill that does not need to be Taught**

These things – *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha* are being cultivated, exercised and portrayed by themselves without the aid of any tutoring or guidance. These things are making their own endeavors in their own way.

Just as the efforts and actions of those who practice the Dhamma lead one way, the somewhat similar efforts and actions of those practicing - greed, hatred and delusion - lead another way. One way leads to freedom. The other way leads to suffering. Although no one is taught the formal skills of greed, hatred or delusion, as goals in themselves, these base characteristics are so interwoven into the fabric of worldly life it seems almost as though they have become a worldly aptitude in their own right. Thus, caught in their grip, people tread the path of suffering, as they make their journey through life. Because of the base nature and quality of these defilements, most people commit one transgression after another. Greed, hatred and delusion can be so blinding and deceptive! That is the reason why the Buddha said:

“He who is clothed in greed is unaware of goodness.”

“He who is wrapped in hatred is unaware of goodness.”

“He who is immersed in delusion is unaware of goodness.”

The Buddha declared that greed, hatred and delusion cloud one’s vision. They have the power to blind us so that we cannot even recognize the issue at hand and know or see our own transgressions.

### **Short-lived Reality**

There are people whose sole aim in life is simply to survive in society, to live in a worldly manner. These people foolishly believe that they can find meaning and purpose in life through a never-ending quest for sensual pleasures. Humans tend to like, want and crave the experience of pleasantness associated with the five senses. Without doubt, there are pleasant sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches. These pleasures and joys, which arise in dependence on our five senses, are the pleasures and joys of sensuality. It is these sensual pleasures that people endlessly and madly pursue.

The desire to enjoy such pleasures has so overwhelmed humans that it could accurately be termed ‘that which they want to do’. Sadly, the forces of greed, hatred and delusion blind most people. These defilements are further reinforced by the values of society at large; values rooted in greed, hatred and delusion. The craving for gratification and sensual pleasures feels completely natural to most people; so much so, that they actually come to believe that satisfying their craving is really ‘that which they want to do.’ This erroneous belief often changes once they recognize the inherent danger in pursuing such a course of action. But for those who continue to revel in the pleasures of the senses, life is never enough.

### **Isn’t this what is supposed to be done in life?**

People invest so much time in the pursuit of pleasure. The few moments of enjoyment that result from all their efforts are minute in comparison. It is so pitiful, so unworthy! Nevertheless, they strive tirelessly, unashamedly, unremorsefully in the pursuit of sensuality. They might even go so far as to ask, “Isn’t this what is supposed to be done in life?”

If we were to look at the manner in which people pursue sensual pleasures, we would soon discover the motivating force of greed, hatred and delusion. Some people pursue pleasures because of greed. For others the prime motivation is hatred. Greed and hatred always arise together with delusion. Greed, hatred and delusion always culminate in disappointment and failure.

With the arising of greed, in order to obtain that which they want, human beings defy heat and cold. Without concern about the effect of their actions, they destroy, crush and exterminate creatures that bite or are otherwise threatening to them. Hatred accompanies greed. Without any certainty of acquiring what they want, they risk their lives willingly, contending with hardships and hunger. They accept the deception of ignorance (*avijjā*), so they suffer. Their suffering is guaranteed. It is the high cost of wallowing in the delights of sensuality. It exists in the here and now and results from being consumed by uncontrollable craving for sensual pleasures.

These are the dangers of sensuality. Unless one recognizes these dangers one cannot know what ought to be done. Only when one knows and sees the truth of this will they be convinced of what it is they really want to do

and what it is that really needs to be done.

### **The Debt that is Kamma**

The kamma, which leads to rebirth in one of the four woeful planes, proliferates from the pursuit of sensuality. With kamma comes debt, and it is the law of nature that at sometime or another our kammic debt has to be paid. No one prays to be reborn in one of the four woeful planes. Nevertheless, when greed, hatred and delusion motivate us to act in unwholesome ways, it has that result. It is as though we actually prayed for rebirth in a woeful world. When that kamma ripens, we will be carried into one of those woeful realms.

Sometimes sensual pleasures are elusive. When people don't get what they want, they tend to be sad. They lament and grieve and this is suffering. Suffering, in this instance, begins with the craving for sensual pleasures.

Suffering results not only from craving for sensual pleasures, but also from attaining them. Once the sought after pleasures are attained, how can we hold on to them? We are almost immediately troubled by the fear of losing them, so we worry and fret and desperately cling to that which we think gives us pleasure. This, too, is suffering.

Liberation from the anguish and suffering of sensuality is the practice of renunciation.

### **The meat chunk that is sensual bliss**

People kill one another, people harm one another, and they argue with one another all because of wanting to possess the objects of sensuality. Therefore, the Buddha once likened sensuality to a chunk of meat. To a flock of hun-

gry birds trying to pluck it from the beak of a falcon, that chunk of meat becomes the object of their craving. They attack the falcon, as a flock, pecking at his body trying to make him release the chunk of meat. To be able to escape from suffering one must, therefore, entirely let go of the chunk of meat that is sensuality. Suffering will prevail as long as sensuality is not discarded. Holding on, the falcon will be pecked to death; if not to death, he will at the very least experience near-death suffering.

### **Are defilements a tonic?**

Being born, as a human being, is suffering. Our bodies are composed of the five clinging aggregates. These aggregates are our human burden. Who carries this burden? We do. As long as we carry the burden of sensuality, we suffer. Just having a body is already a heavy burden. To take on the added responsibilities of relationships and of owning and maintaining material possessions is too much extra burden for one to carry. It is almost beyond one's capacity to bear this extra burden. Expanding clouds of defilements appear to act as a tonic to aid in supporting that burden. They seem to be urging us, "Go ahead and do it! Take it." As if it were not enough just bearing one's own defilements, they seem to be urging us to bear the defilements of others, too. In any case, this is asking for suffering and hardship. It is surely not inviting peace and tranquility.

People think that sensuality is the highest form of pleasure but we see that it is suffering. On the other hand, people think that renunciation is suffering when it is exactly the opposite. Renunciation leads to delight. It is a state of being filled with ecstasy and rapture. It is, in fact,



the way to the highest pleasure. It is true bliss.

### **True Peace – Renunciation**

To attain the bliss of renunciation one has to understand what renunciation is. Becoming a monk and leading an ascetic life in the forest is one form of renunciation. Another way to practice renunciation is by intentionally dissociating oneself from the trap of all sensual pleasures. Renunciation can be practiced by anyone, at anytime, who sincerely wishes to be free from suffering. Through the practice of renunciation, one is finally able to dispel the fog of defilements once and for all.

Let me explain with the following example:

There are two trees. One is fruitless. The other is fruitful. The latter is heavy with ripe juicy fruit, which is the object of human sensuality. Such a tree attracts those desirous of its fruits. It is true that the fruit of sensuality is indeed beautiful to behold. People will do almost anything to get at it. They will pick the tree bare and ruthlessly throw sticks and stones at it, in an attempt to get at the fruits that are out of reach. Soon enough that tree is stripped of its beauty.

The simple beauty of a tree without fruit, however, becomes more apparent when the fruit-bearing tree gets damaged. When one begins to trust that a life with nothing is a worthy life, then true peace is at hand. This is the life of one who is practicing renunciation.

### **Inviting Perils**

All living beings fear danger. Even though we all wish to be free of fear and anxiety, fear and anxiety accompa-

nies sensuality. So, as long as people are driven by sensuality, they are by nature subject to association with danger. Sensuality is like a powerful magnet that attracts danger from antagonists, enemies, despots and criminals.

Wherever there is sensuality, there is danger. Similarly, whenever there are outstanding kammic debts to be paid, then sooner or later there will be calls for the settlement of those debts. In the unbroken cycles of *saü sāra*, beings continue to accumulate so much unwholesome kamma. When their unwholesome kamma ripens, it can be as if waters rise, fires flare up and frightening inanimate entities threaten death and destruction – as though those entities actually possessed a life of their own. This is the suffering that arises from craving and clinging rooted in sensuality. For this reason, the dangers of sensuality need to be identified, discerned and eradicated outright.

### **The suffering of those sharing the same preoccupation**

Despite class differences, the search for sensuality is the same. It is a blinding force that mesmerizes those who are driven by their own unquenchable thirst for sensual pleasures. It is one of the main reasons why rulers quarrel with rulers, Brahmins quarrel with Brahmins, the wealthy quarrel with the wealthy, and so on.

Disputes often arise among those with the same self-interests. Paradoxically, common interests often lead to disagreement rather than to accord; they can quickly become the breeding ground of challengers and adversaries or enemies. Jealousy, envy, resentment and malevolence towards others with the same self interests create adversaries. These negative states are rooted in possessiveness and fear. Consequently, we can see how sensual-

ity becomes the cause for strife between parents and children, between siblings and between friends and colleagues. Disputes and quarrels can turn into fights, and fights based on the craving for sensuality can lead to serious injury or even death.

Human beings are slaves to lust and craving, tormented by the defilements of their own mind. They cannot see the ways in which they cater to the whims of their own untrained mind. What's more, they identify with their defilements. Their ego accepts as true the mistaken belief that, "I, myself, am greed; I, myself, am hatred; I, myself, am delusion." In other words, they believe that they and their defilements are one and the same. So, instead of leading their mind, such people are being led by their mind. They are being manipulated by ignorance. This is suffering.

#### **Those who have made advance reservations**

Human beings cannot help but accumulate a great deal of unwholesome kamma in the exhausting pursuit for sensual gratification. In order to pay off all those accumulated unwholesome kammic debts in future existences, advanced bookings and reservations are, without a doubt, being made. Even in their present existence, most people suffer from anxiety and fatigue. Many of us shed tears of sorrow due to our intense craving for sensual fulfillment.

#### **Cognizance of the Truth - The most essential aspect**

If someone is capable of seeing only that which is visible and of hearing only that which is audible, then he or she will be unprepared for future existences that cannot be seen or heard. It is necessary for human beings to be

able to visualize that which is invisible and to be able to discern that which is inaudible. In order to penetrate the truth, one must be capable of perceiving that which lies beyond what can merely be seen or heard. One must not remain solely dependent upon the visible and the audible.

We know that self-aggrandizement for the sake of being seen or heard has kammic consequences. However, the value of life cannot be elevated with an irrational mentality that is only concerned with superficial worldly appearances. Kamma does not cease to operate just because of pleasant appearances and harmonious sounds. Surely, life's value is not to conform to a world that is only interested in superficial appearances and hearsay. It isn't at all important whether one is acclaimed and recognized by the world. On the other hand, it is essential to be cognizant of the truth.

#### **Those who are enslaving themselves**

As we have seen, there are people who do what they want to do simply for the sake of sensual enjoyment. These people are enslaved by their defilements. They capitulate to the impulses of their untamed mind. Their lives are structured around defilements. There are others, however, who practice renunciation for the sake of liberation from sensuality. Liberation can be attained through the noble training of morality (*Sīla*), the noble training of concentration (*Samādhi*) and the noble training of insight (*Paññā*). One takes on these practices because of the genuine desire to attain the bliss of concentration (*jhāna*), the bliss of insight, the bliss of path, the bliss of fruition and the bliss of Nibbāna. This is doing what ought to be done in order to attain that which is truly desired. It is leading the mind

rather than being led by the mind. The process is an expression of wisdom.

### **Continued journeys of weariness**

Defilements overwhelm all those who remain tainted by them. Generally, women have to deal with defilements that are specific challenges for them as women. The same is true for men who also have to deal with defilements that are unique challenges for them, as men.

Therefore, in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, The Lord Buddha spoke thus:

“I know of no other single form by which a man’s heart is so enslaved as it is by that of a woman. A woman’s form obsesses a man’s heart.”

“Similarly, I know of no other single form by which a woman’s heart is so enslaved as it is by that of a man. A man’s form obsesses a woman’s heart.”

The Lord Buddha spoke the same in regard to the senses of sound, smell, taste and touch.

The pursuit of such sensual pleasures often causes human beings to feel enervated, almost as though they were going to wither away. This suffering endures as long as beings are bound to journey through the cycles of rebirths (*Saṁsāra*). The only means of escape is to bring *saṁsāra* to an end. To do this one must irreversibly abandon all craving and lust.

It is important to understand that it is not the sensual pleasures of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch that cause our suffering. *Craving* for the sensual pleasures of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch is what causes our suffer-

ing. As long as craving exists, our never-ending journey through *saṁsāra* shall continue.

### **Sensuality, Sensitivity, Suffering**

There is no effect without a cause. This is the teaching of The Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha never spoke about causeless effects. As you might expect, the emergence of craving or desire is what causes one to seek the pleasures related to the senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.

Existence has its origin in the craving for life. Within eleven weeks of conception eye-sensitivity, ear-sensitivity, nose-sensitivity and tongue-sensitivity start to develop. These sensitivities are the receptors of the senses of sight, sound, smell and taste. Sensitivity to touch, however, exists from the moment of conception.

How have these sensitivities come into existence? What are their origins? We need to look for the answers to these questions.

Eye-sensitivity, which is the ability to see a visual object, arises from craving for visual pleasures. This is the perception of sight. Its origin is *kamma*.

Similarly, ear-sensitivity, which is the ability to hear an auditory object, arises from craving for auditory pleasures. This is the perception of hearing. Its origin is also *kamma*.

Likewise, the rest of the sensitivities also originate from their respective cravings and *kamma*.

Forms and appearances are sought after because of eye-sensitivity, which arises from *kamma* and springs from craving to perceive visible objects. In the same way, sounds are sought after because of ear-sensitivity, which arises

from kamma and springs from craving to perceive auditory objects.

Liberation is not possible unless human beings are able to give up the foolish notion and belief that ‘this is what I want to see’ [rather than what the eye-sensitivity desires to see]; ‘this is what I want to hear’ [rather than what the ear-sensitivity desires to hear].’

They believe that it is they themselves who want to enjoy the pleasures of sight. In fact, they are only succumbing to the lust for visual objects. Living in such a misguided way is dishonorable.

If we were to look into the basic causes of the five sense sensitivities, it would point the way to suffering and delusion. To be enslaved to the senses throughout one’s life is no small matter. When one thinks deeply about this, it is clear that a life of sensory enslavement is a life filled with misery and suffering. The ordeals and suffering of existence are, indeed, extensive.

### **The Causes of Weariness**

In the scriptures it says, “The beginning of the six sense-organs is the beginning of existence.” These six sense-organs are the five sensitivities plus the mind-base (*manāyatana*). The Lord Buddha said, “Living beings suffer agony and exhaustion due to the formation of the six-sense-organs.”

Eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body sensitivity are the cause of suffering and agony in living beings. The same is true of the mind-base (*manāyatana*).

Touch arises due to the sensitivities and because of touch, feeling arises. With feeling comes craving. The crav-

ing for forms, the craving for sound and all other such cravings arise. In the same way, with the arising of craving, clinging arises. So, set in motion by intense clinging, resultant wholesome or unwholesome actions arise. They cause birth. Birth being present, becoming, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair come to be.

All the suffering of becoming, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain (illness of the body), displeasure (illness of the mind) and despair (the utter weariness of the mind) is the outcome of unwise-attention and ignorance (*avijjā*).

### **Daring to endorse unwritten agreements**

In our human world, filled with people who lack access to the eye of wisdom, most people revel in the delights of sensuality. They ignore moral codes and are looked down upon and despised by many. With eye-sensitivity, they take pleasure in the beauty and appearance of different ages, both young and old alike. The sad truth is, these people are not looked down upon or despised by most. They are permitted to abandon moral codes through an unwritten agreement.

### **What one wants to do?**

Striving for sensual gratification cannot be termed ‘what one wants to do’. It is merely giving in to the desires dictated by craving and lust, and it makes one subservient to his or her defilements.

What is it that you actually want to do? Do you merely want to indulge your desires and defilements or do you want to be liberated from defilements? These are the two questions that need to be asked.

If sense gratification is your goal, then what you really want to do is simply give in to the insatiable cravings of the defilements. On the other hand, if you come to see the dangers and futility inherent in indulging sensual pleasures, you may begin to yearn for liberation and may start to practice for liberation. When that happens it can be said that what you are doing is for freeing yourself from the manipulation and control of the defilements.

Liberation from defilements is the most worthy and highest goal that humankind can achieve. Life is meaningful only when one works towards that worthy goal. Otherwise, beings are chained to the wheel of becoming, taking birth over and over again in the never-ending cycles of *saṃsāra*. This is not the real meaning or purpose of existence.

To be enslaved in the service of one's defilements is not the meaning of 'doing what one wants to do.' It is just laboring in vain to carry out the wishes of the defilements. One ought to strive instead for freedom from such an existence. Only then can it be said that 'one is doing what one wants to do.'

#### **How to make your mind follow your wish**

In order to train one's mind to follow one's true wishes, one has to practice those three noble attributes that are *Sīla*, *Samādhi* and *Paññā*.

The practice of *Sīla* subdues the wishes of defilements. It purifies one's bodily and verbal actions.

The practice of *Samādhi* purifies one's mental actions. It is the practice of training the mind to concentrate on a single object. When one reaches a certain level of devel-

opment in this practice, one is able to direct his mind in accordance with his true wishes. Mental actions remain pure as long as the concentrated mind is steadily focused on a single object.

In order to achieve everlasting purity of the mind, however, one must practice insight meditation (*vipassanā*). It is at the stage of insight meditation that one examines the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self throughout the mind-matter complex. In order to do so, the ultimate truth of mind and matter needs to be experienced and understood with insight. It is, therefore, necessary to attain the knowledge of discerning ultimate mentality and materiality.

Following the attainment of the knowledge of ultimate mentality and materiality comes the knowledge of discerning causes and conditions through the direct discernment of cause and effect (Dependent Origination). This knowledge also needs to be directly realized.

Finally, after having acquired the wisdom of vipassana insight knowledge through contemplating *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta* on ultimate truths, there follows a step-by-step development of path and fruition knowledge. Only then can it be said that one has succeeded in mastering the mind in accordance with his or her true wishes. Until then, the mind continues to dictate to him or her. That person who has realized path and fruition knowledge becomes the One referred to as having 'done what ought to be done.'

**Development of the Mind in Stages**

In the minds of those people whose view of life is limited to the desire for sensuality, what they want to do is merely catering to the dictates of defilements. From their point of view, they see beauty in sensuality. That is why the Lord Buddha said, “If there were no gratification in sensuality, beings would not become enamored with it; but because there is gratification in sensuality, beings become enamored with it.”

In contrast, those who recognize the faults inherent in sensuality see the danger of sensuality. That is why the Lord Buddha said, “If there were no danger in sensuality, beings would not experience revulsion towards it; but because there is danger in sensuality, beings experience revulsion towards it.”

When a person has become fully aware of the disadvantages of sensuality, his or her desires to escort sensuality through life’s journey gradually fades away. It slowly but surely dissipates, then evaporates. Such a person sincerely begins to seek for a way or means to liberate himself from sensuality. This is the gradual development of the mind. It occurs in stages. That is why the Lord Buddha said, “If there were no escape from sensuality, beings would not escape from it; but because there is escape from sensuality, beings escape from it.”

The explicit means and practice for liberation from sensuality can only be found in the precious teachings of the Fully Enlightened Buddhas.

It is only when a virtuous person ardently desires liberation that he or she is inclined and willing to fervently practice. And, it is only through practice that he or she

can gradually free themselves from the clutches of the defilements. Once they are firmly on the path to freedom, such a person is qualified to proclaim, “This truly is what I want to do.” The proclamation is, in effect, practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, which is that which ought to be done and which leads to the eventual termination of all cravings. In other words, by following the Noble Eightfold Path one is gradually liberated from the defilements. All anxieties and miseries are extinguished. When this happens it could be said that that which ought to be done has been accomplished.

**The contention between craving and wisdom**

Sooner or later, people come to realize that the attainment and enjoyment of sought-after sensual delights in no way extinguishes or satisfies their thirst and craving. They very often discover, after they acquire whatever it was they thought they wanted, that their gratification was short-lived. They have to admit, if just to themselves, that the object of their desire was not what they really wanted after all. This is a precious opportunity for them to investigate the contention between the cravings born from seeking short-lived pleasures, in contrast to the wisdom born from seeking the truth. As long as the quest for sensuality remains unexamined, one’s true actual ‘want’ or ‘wants’ will remain unknown. Whenever craving is present there will always be an endless stream of new ‘wants’ arising. This is suffering.

**That’s what I want to do**

With liberation comes profound contentment. Liberation is void of craving. The person who ‘wants this’ and

What One Wants to Do

‘wants that’ is no more. A new person comes into being. For such a person, “What had to be done has been done.”

May you be such a person.

May all beings be blessed with the attainment of the perfections and be able to proclaim, ‘What I want to do is to be liberated.’

May all beings be replete with perfections and virtues.

May all beings practice *Sīla*, *Samādhi* and *Paññā*, which are the prerequisites for liberation.

May all beings be able to reach the yonder shore of Nibbāna.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

*Bhikkhu Revata*

Pa-Auk Forest Monastery,  
Myanmar.

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