

Problems & Responsibilities

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Are you worried? Are you miserable? If so, you are invited to read this booklet to develop a better understanding of your problems. It is dedicated to you and to those who worry.

Fear and Worry

Fear and worry are born of the imaginings of a mind that is influenced by worldly conditions. They are rooted in craving and attachment. In fact, life is like a motion picture in which everything is constantly moving and changing. Nothing in this world is permanent or still. Those who are youthful and strong have fear of dying young. Those who are old and suffering worry about living too long. Locked in between are those who craze for merriment all the year round.

Joyful expectations of the pleasant seem to pass of too quickly. Fearful expectations of the unpleasant create anxieties that do not seem to go away. Such feelings are natural. Such ups and downs of life play with an illusory self or ego like puppets on a string. But the mind is supreme unto itself.

The training of the mind, otherwise known as mental culture, is the first step towards taming mental unrest. The Buddha has explained:

"From craving springs grief,

from craving springs fear,

For him who is wholly free from craving,

there is no grief, much less fear."

All attachments will end in sorrow. Neither tears nor long good-byes can end the transitoriness of life. All compounded things are impermanent.

Old and young suffer in this existence. No one is exempted. Many teenagers have growing pains. Being neither frogs nor tadpoles, teenagers are understandably inexperienced at building stable relationships with members of the opposite sex. They try to show off their beauty in trying to impress their opposite sex who are flattered to see themselves as sex objects. Both try to behave not as they really are but as what they think is adult. They are afraid that if they behave naturally they will be laughed at. Behavior like this has the potential for exploitation. There is fear of rejection as well as worry about deflated egos. Unrequited love will often 'break' many teenage hearts because they feel they have made 'fools of themselves'. Some are even driven to commit suicide. But such traumas could be avoided if life is seen as it really is. Young people must be taught the Buddhist approach to life, so that they can grow into maturity the correct way.

"Wheresoever fear arises, it arises in the fool, not in the wise man." Says the Buddha. Fear is nothing more than a state of mind. One's state of mind is subject to control and direction; the negative use of thought produces fear, the positive use realizes hopes and ideals. The choice rests entirely with ourselves. Every human being has the ability to control his own mind. Nature has endowed man with absolute control over one thing, and that is thought. Everything a man creates begins in the form of a thought. Here is the key to help one understand the principle by which fear may be mastered.

A noted British anatomist was once asked by a student what was the best cure for fear, and he answered, "Try doing something for someone."

The student was considerably astonished by the reply, and requested further enlightenment whereupon his instructor said, "You can't have two opposing sets of thoughts in your mind at one and the same time." One set of thoughts will always drive the other out. If, for instance, your mind is completely occupied with an unselfish desire to help someone else, you can't be harbouring fear at the same time.

"Worry dries up the blood sooner than age." Fear and worry in moderation are instincts of self-preservation. but constant irrational fear and prolonged worry are relentless enemies to the human body. They derange the normal bodily functions.

Control your Mind

Man's mind influences his body profoundly. the mind has just as much potential to be a meditation as it has to be a poison. When the mind is vicious, it can kill a being but when it is steady and diligent it can benefit others. When the mind is concentrated on right thoughts, and supported by right effort and understanding, the effect it produces is immense' A mind with pure and wholesome thoughts leads to healthy relaxed living'

The Buddha says: "No enemy can harm one so much as one's own thoughts of craving, thoughts of hate, thoughts of jealousy and so on."

A man who does not know how to adjust his mind according to circumstances is as if dead. Turn your mind inwards, and try to find pleasure within yourself.

It is only when the mind is controlled and properly directed that it becomes useful to its owner and society. An unruly mind is a liability both to its owner and to others. All the havoc wrought in this world is the creation of men who have not learned the way of mind control, balance and poise.

Calmness is not weakness. A calm attitude at all times shows a man of culture. It is not too hard for one to be calm when things are favourable, but to be composed when things are wrong is hard indeed. It is this difficult quality that is worth achieving, for by exercising such calm and control, a man builds strength of character.

The Voice of Nature

Modern man does not listen to the voice of nature because of his preoccupation with material gain and pleasure. His mental activities are so preoccupied with worldly pleasures that he neglects the needs of his spiritual self. This unnatural behavior of contemporary man immediately results in a wrong world view of human life and its ultimate purpose. It is the cause of all the frustration, anxiety, fear and insecurity of our present times.

If man is cruel and wicked, lives against the laws of nature and the cosmos. his acts, words and thoughts pollute the whole atmosphere. Nature abused will not provide what man requires for his living instead, clashes, conflicts, epidemics and disasters will be in store for him.

If man lives in accordance with this natural law, leads a righteous life, purifies the atmosphere through the merits of his virtues and radiates his compassionate love towards other living beings, he can bring about human happiness. One who really likes peace should not violate another man's freedom. It is wrong to disturb and deceive others.

You may be a very busy person, but spend at least a few minutes a day in meditation or in reading some valuable books. This habit will relieve you of your worries and will develop your mind. Religion is for your benefit. Therefore, it is your duty to think about your religion. Spare some time to attend gatherings held in a religious atmosphere. Even a short period spent in the company of spiritually inclined people will produce good results.

Mental Health and Criminal Tendencies

The increase of all kind of mental ailments and disturbances is the most alarming of all diseases of the modern age. There are more and more mentally sick patients all over the world; especially in affluent countries.

In many cases the criminal element within our society is mentioned in the same breath as mental illness. One positive and far-reaching result stemming directly from the research work of Freud, is the recognition that criminals and delinquents are mentally sick people, who need treatment rather than punishment. It is this liberal outlook on the "problem that is the basis of all "progressive" social reform to replace punishment with rehabilitation.

Know They Neighbor

When we do not see how other people live, we may not learn the different ways of living. Travel is the best form of education. Personal encounters with people different from ourselves make us feel more sympathetic. Intolerance is often born of ignorance of another person's needs and way of thinking.

Man's Unhappiness

The Buddha taught that all of man's unhappiness results from selfish desire: more pleasure that money can buy, more power over other men, and, most important of all, to live forever, even after death! The desire for these things makes things only for themselves, and do not care about what happens to other people. When their wishes are not fulfilled, they become restless and discontented. The only way to avoid this restlessness is to get rid of the desires that cause it. This is very difficult; but when a man achieves it, he appreciates it.

Time will Heal Our Wounds

Trouble passes. What has caused you to burst into tears will soon be forgotten. You may remember that you cried but not why you did so! As we grow up and go through life, we are often surprised at how we lie awake at night brooding over something that has upset us during the day, or how we nurse resentment against someone by letting the same thoughts run through our minds concerning how to have our own back. We may fall into a rage at the spur of the moment over something, and later wonder what it was we were so angry about, and be surprised to realize what a waste of time and energy it had all been. We have deliberately gone on being unhappy when we could have stopped being so and started thinking about something else more wholesome.

Whatever our troubles are, and however aggrieved we may feel, time will heal our wounds. But surely there must be something we can do to prevent ourselves from being hurt in the first place. Why should we allow others or troubles to drain away our energy and make us unhappy? The answer is that they do not. It is we who make ourselves unhappy.

You may have some trouble in your work place but you should not infect your home with a bad atmosphere. You should realize that there is an end to those problems' The solutions could be found in achieving freedom from our selfish desires by eradicating all forms of confusion and ignorance.

Whenever we fail to find a solution to a problem, we are inclined to find a scapegoat, to vent our frustration. We are not prepared to admit our own shortcomings. It is easier to put the blame on others. In fact, some even take pleasure in doing so. This is a completely wrong attitude to adopt. We must not show resentment towards others. We should do our utmost, pains-takingly and calmly, to resolve our own problems. We must be prepared to face up to any. difficulties that we encounter.

Healthy Atmosphere

Jokes and remarks directed at you in bad taste should be deflected with good humour. This is one way to avoid enmity with anybody. Losing your cool while playing the game will get you strung up. You will forfeit a possible win. That will even spoil the pleasure of those watching the game.

There is no way you can change everyone in this world to your way of thinking. It is not even desirable. If everyone agrees with you, the world will soon run out of ideas.

There are many ways of correcting a person when he is wrong. By criticizing, blaming and railing at him in public, you will be humiliating and not correcting him. Criticism is certain to make more enemies. If you can show concern for a man's future good with kind words, he will thank you for it someday.

Never use harsh or unpleasant words whenever you express your views on issues. Diplomacy, gentleness and politeness do not hurt anybody. In fact they will open many doors.

Do not feel defensive when your own faults are pointed out. Your faults are your signposts for learning perfection. Temper is a poor camouflage for shortcomings. When someone loses his temper he will blurt out too many things better left unsaid. Never reveal a former friend's personal secret no matter how angry you are with him now. You will only degrade yourself in the process and others could never accept you as sincere friend thereafter. Others will think you could do the same thing you did to injure a former friend: no one will trust you.

Have Courage to face Criticism

Sweetness creates sickness, bitterness comes with the cure. Praise is sweetness, an excess of which causes sickness; and criticism is like a bitter pill which cures. We must have the courage to welcome criticism and not be afraid of it.

"The ugliness we see in other Is a reflection of our own nature"

A man's life, circumstances and world are a reflection of his own thoughts and beliefs. All men are mirrors to themselves, sores, ills, and all.

Happiness and Materialism

Most people never think properly. All through their lives they are like race-track greyhounds running after a rabbit decoy. When the chase ends, all excitement disappears. This is very much like the nature of sensual happiness in the wonderland of materialism. As soon as the desired object is attained, the happiness ends and new desires arise. Getting the object appears not quite as satisfying as the chase itself.

Or when we lose something, remember the following advice:-

"Say not that this is yours and that is mine,
Just say, this came to you and that to me,
So we may not regret the fading shine,
Of all the glorious things which ceased to be."

Wealth is not something for you to accumulate for craving's sake. It is intended for your welfare as well as of others. Try to make the world around you a better place to live in . Use your wealth wisely to reduce the sufferings of the poor, the sick and the aged. Fulfill your duties to your people, your country and your religion. When the time comes for you to leave, imagine what peace and bliss they could bring as you recall the past good and selfless deeds you have done.

To seek wealth through gambling is like expecting a passing cloud to shelter us from the sun. On the other hand, to aspire for prosperity through diligent work is as secure as building a permanent shelter against sun and rain.

"Your property will remain when you die. Your friends and relatives will follow you up to your grave. But only good or bad actions you have done during your life-time (Karma) will follow you beyond the grave."

Fulfilling dreams of riches may sound magical. but fear and worry always lie in wait for such magic to wear off. A rich lifestyle brings its share of mental disturbance. With an abundance of ill-used wealth, simple things in life like friendship trust and confidence which are taken for granted in humbler circumstances become impossible to attain. When a lifestyle begins to create insecurity, it requires wisdom to put oneself on the right track again. Riches have their trade-offs; the happiness of owning them is diminished by as much fear and worry about losing them.

For our personal happiness we should acquire wealth righteously. " Blessed are they who earn their living without harming others" says the Buddha. Happiness cannot be long-lived and meaningful if wealth leaves sorrow and suffering in its wake. Wealth flouted arouses envy; but wealth well-conducted earns respect.

Your wealth can only edify your house but not you. Only your own virtue can edify you. Your dress can adorn your body but not you. Only your good conduct can.

Ultimately, it is bliss to know that "happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself." The world may not be what you want it to be but you can tune your heart to find happiness within it. It is only when you have suffered for doing good that you can rise above others in understanding and personal happiness.

"If we want to find happiness, let us stop thinking about gratitude or ingratitude and give for the inner joy of giving. Ingratitude is natural - like weeds. Gratitude is like a rose. It has to be fed, watered and cultivated and loved and protected." (Dale Carnegie)