

Essential Dhamma Series

2



*A chapter from upcoming book*

**Towards the Light**

[Revised Edition]

**MORALITY | SĪLA**

**Sylvia Bay**

A Scholar and Practitioner

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# MORALITY (SĪLA)

by Sylvia Bay

*Second chapter from upcoming book,  
"Towards The Light".*

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"Not to do evil, to cultivate good, to purify one's mind – this is the teaching of the Buddhas."

- The Buddha<sup>1</sup> -

## The Author

*"The realisation of Dhamma is like sunrise. You start out  
in pitch darkness. You see nothing. You are clueless.  
Your ignorance makes you blind."*

### Abstract from Dawning of Dhamma

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Sylvia published her first book in May 2014, "Between The Lines: An Analytical Appreciation of Buddha's Life" and the Combined Book Edition comprising Volume 1 and Volume 2 was published in 2017. She is now in the midst of writing her second book, "Towards The Light".

## Message from the Author

**Once** there was a conversation between Buddha and his first cousin, Mahanama. Mahanama wanted to know what would happen to him if he were to die in an accident with his mind "muddled"? Where would his rebirth destination be? Buddha assured him that because his mind had been "fortified" by the five mental states, he would be fine. He would "go upwards... go to distinction," i.e., the heavens. The five mental states highlighted by Buddha were faith (*saddhā*), morality (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

My forthcoming book is titled **Towards the Light**. The book will explore these five mental states, covering in detail answers to the following questions: *What are they, according to the suttas? Why are they important? How do they contribute to happiness in this life? How do they support our mind at death? And how to properly cultivate these mental states so that our mind is "fortified" for a good rebirth?*

May you all find joy in reading and learning the Dhamma!

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## [I] MORALITY (SĪLA)

There are various levels of understanding the term morality. At one level, as defined by Oxford dictionary, morality refers to “principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour.”<sup>2</sup> Here we are trying to understand what behaviours are approved of and encouraged and others considered wrong and discouraged, and why so. At another level, as defined by Collins, morality is “a system of principles and values concerning people’s behaviour, which is generally accepted by a society.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, society’s values and culture form an important basis for why certain behaviours are considered right and approved of.

What is often left unsaid is that there is actually a strong element of pragmatism in morality. Man and society consider morality desirable and to be upheld because it helps to constrain Man’s basic negative impulses, namely, greed, anger and his capacity for violence and cruelty. Man’s fearsome capacity often lies dormant until under the ‘right’ conditions when it can and will surge to the fore to inflict pain and wreak havoc in pursuit of his selfish desires and pleasure. If Man acts purely by self-serving instincts, society will inevitably collapse because he will fight in total disregard for other’s welfare and feelings to secure his share of society’s finite resources. If everybody combats in zero-sum terms, there would be total social, political and economic collapse and complete chaos.

So since time immemorial, Man has recognised the need to balance his desires and self-interests with what is fundamentally good for communal well-being: peace, security, economic growth and happiness. When society upholds morality, everyone, including the weak and vulnerable, is safe and protected. Society thrives and progresses and the outcome is public good. When society loses its moral compass, everyone, and not just society’s most helpless, is a potential victim. Thus, all functioning societies will subscribe to upholding morality for it is about protecting what is important and valued: life, property, loved ones and the pursuit of happiness.

That is why all major religions have very similar core moral tenets about what is immoral, which essentially boils down to ‘don’t kill, don’t steal, don’t commit adultery and don’t lie’. Across time and space, societies also generally share consensus on what are desirable moral qualities and what are not. Being kind and compassionate is desirable, being mean and cruel is not. Looking after your parents, fulfilling your responsibilities, being an upright member of society, are all applauded while lacking piety, being irresponsible, taking advantage of others, are all frowned upon.



## [II] BUDDHA'S TEACHING ON *SĪLA*

*Sīla* features prominently in Buddha's teaching. In numerous discourses, Buddha had described the critical importance of cultivating *sīla* because it was essential for happiness in life and non-negotiable for spiritual progress. One without *sīla* is fundamentally unhappy. He may have perverted delight and some measure of thrill from satisfying his greed or even anger, but that pleasure is short-lived. Deep down he is never truly happy. His unwholesome mind would not be truly at peace and can never enjoy any real and meaningful spiritual breakthrough.

But what is *sīla*? The word has usually been translated into English as 'morality'. While this is correct, it is incomplete. In ordinary context, *sīla* is about moral or immoral actions, which is the first level conventional definition of morality. On this score, Buddha had prescribed long lists of both the meritorious actions that should be performed and the immoral ones that should be avoided. They are commonly called the moral precepts, the ten meritorious deeds and ten unwholesome acts. In this context, when the worldling observes *sīla*, he avoids hurting others even as he satisfies his own desires, interests and feelings. Conversely, if he is completely self-absorbed and acts in total disregard for the feelings and well-being of others, he is ignoring *sīla*.

*Sīla* is not just about conduct, it also refers to motivations or intentions behind an action. If an action is motivated by evil intentions, i.e., greed, anger and delusion, it is unwholesome (*akusala*) regardless of the outcome. And actions motivated by *akusala* will lead to pain and suffering for oneself and for another. Conversely, actions motivated by wholesome (*kusala*) intentions are *sīla* regardless of the outcome. Wholesome intentions will lead to the doer experiencing happiness.

But Buddha's teaching on *sīla* goes beyond just conventional notions of morality, which is mostly about not hurting another in the pursuit of one's interests. Quite unique to Buddhism, *sīla* is also about cultivating virtues or purity necessary for spiritual development and ultimate enlightenment and liberation, namely *Nibbāna*.<sup>4</sup> Used in this context, *sīla* refers to taming the average mind's unskilful mental habits. These include mental states that are not necessarily immoral but are obstructive to spiritual progress. Those mental states include sense desire, sloth and torpor, restlessness, worry, impatience, pride, perplexity and insecurity. They prevent the mind from achieving rapture, peace and tranquillity; which are necessary conditions for the arising of such profound clarity and awareness that enables the mind to discern for itself how it actually works.

Incidentally, *sīla* in Buddha's teaching is for one to exercise self-restraint and not to cast judgement on others. In fact, being self-righteous is the antithesis of being *sīla*. The mind of one who is sanctimonious is narrow, petty, hard and probably full of ill-will. That's a lot of pain and suffering.

## [III] BUDDHIST CODE OF MORAL CONDUCT

There is a celebrated verse in the *Dhammapada* that neatly sums up the Buddhist code of moral conduct and it goes like this: “Not to do evil, to cultivate good, to purify one’s mind – this is the teaching of the Buddhas”.<sup>5</sup> It reflects two levels of practice. The first level is about holding the morality line: to avoid actions that cause harm or pain and to perform those that promote well-being. The second and higher level of practice is about purifying our mind and keeping it free from the basic defilements of sense desires and anger.<sup>6</sup>

### 1. Avoid Evil

If you look at your own mind, you might notice that for the most part it is almost instinctively self-centred and territorial. When things are going your way, you feel confident, your mood is good, your mind is positive. But it is so easy for the mind to turn negative: get upset, be jealous, be petty, worry, nit-pick, whine and complain and so on. Therefore, we need to be careful to guard against unwholesomeness and not let the mind slide willy-nilly into bad habits.

#### (A) The Five Precepts (*Pañca Sīla*)

Amongst the first things that lay Buddhists are encouraged to observe is a set of five moral precepts.<sup>7</sup> They are recited as follows: “I choose to undertake the precept to abstain from...”

1. taking the lives of living beings;<sup>8</sup>
2. taking things not given;<sup>9</sup>
3. sexual misconduct;<sup>10</sup>
4. false speech;<sup>11</sup> and
5. taking intoxicants that cause heedlessness.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to note that the above precepts are not divine directives forced upon its followers. It is clear from the wording of the precept that upholding it is voluntary, not obligatory. On the scale of morality practices, these precepts are a relatively low bar; one would be guilty of causing some kind of grief, pain or suffering to another if one falls below this bar. Therefore, for one who calls himself a disciple of the Buddha, upholding the precepts is really the least that he should do, morally.

## i. About the Precept of Not Taking Lives

This first precept appears to be quite straightforward. If you have the intention to kill another and he dies, either by your hand or by another's at your instigation, you are guilty of killing.<sup>13</sup> In fact, one would have broken this precept when one merely speaks in favour of killing. Buddha said that when "one encourages others to destroy life", or "approves of the destruction of life" or "speaks in praise of the destruction of life", one has committed killing.<sup>14</sup>

At first glance, it would seem straightforward enough to appreciate the importance of this precept. We accept almost instinctively that taking a life is wrong. So what is the dilemma? It is not over killing *per se*, but over the motivations for and circumstances of the killing. Premeditated murder motivated by greed or anger is deemed wicked and immoral and therefore clearly wrong. But what about killing in self-defence? Killing done by the state i.e., capital punishment, in the name of justice? What about euthanasia, abortion of a defective foetus, suicide, martyrdom for the greater good and so on?

To be clear, any volitional, deliberate and conscious act with intention to end a life is breaking the first precept, regardless of whether or not death occurred. There is no ambiguity about what constitute breaking the precept of killing, whatever the considerations, circumstances or justifications. Even in genuine cases of euthanasia, where the act is often underpinned by wholesome thoughts such as love and compassion for the dying patient, pulling that plug is still breaking the precept of killing.

So, if for whatever reasons you still feel that you have to take that life, then be reconciled in your mind why you have to do it. If you are clear and honest about your motivations being entirely wholesome, then let that be your sacrifice for another. Do not be obsessed about looking for loopholes in the definition of killing. There is *none*. Instead, forgive yourself. Take quiet comfort in your wholesome motivations: be it love or compassion, generosity (because that is your sacrifice to give up something you hold on to) and so on. And then do not dwell on the killing. *Move on*.

## ii. About the Precept of Taking Things Not Given

The second precept has often been shortened to read 'no stealing'. But Buddha's conception of wrongdoing here is actually stricter than the usual legal definition of stealing. The literal translation from the *Pāli* is '*adinnādānā*' which literally means 'taking things that had not been given'. Therefore an act as innocuous as commandeering office stationery for personal use or taking something from common property may not constitute stealing under the law but would be considered a breach of this precept. Buddha had also said that even encouraging another to steal or just speaking in support of theft is breaking the precept.<sup>15</sup>

Buddha was not hair-splitting. The key point about upholding this precept is containing *greed*. As long as you take something that does not belong to you because you wanted it,

regardless of its value and ownership status, it is breaking this precept. The issue is not about ownership but that you have greed strong enough to compel you to act on it. Greed is insidious.<sup>16</sup> If you allow greed to take root in your mind, it will fester, strengthen and eventually overwhelm your mind. Therefore you must stand firm about not yielding even an inch to greed, for once you make any allowance, what will it take before you cross the line completely? The only way to weaken greed is to not entertain even the slightest thought of it. Do not look for ownership loopholes or make any logical justification why it is okay to take. Such thoughts would only feed greed.

### **iii. About the Precept of No Sexual Misconduct**

Buddha had said that one breaks this precept on no sexual misconduct when he has sex with an underage person, a nun or one in spiritual training, a married or engaged woman or one prohibited by the state.<sup>17</sup> This is the only precept where Buddha had laid clear parameters, i.e., a list of women that one should not have sex with. Even so, we should note the spirit of the precept and not just the letter.

This precept is not about a list of touch-nots but about not causing harm, pain and suffering to others in one's quest for carnal gratification. Any action that involves the use of force on and/or intimidation of another for sex would count as breaking this precept. Those actions would include rape, molestation or paedophilia. Sex with an underage partner, even if consensual, is breaking this precept because that would be taking advantage of another's innocence or vulnerability for personal gratification. If you deliberately lie and cheat your way to another's bed, that is also breaking this precept. And this precept would apply to both genders, not just to men.

But the precept is silent about sexual orientation such as homosexuality and pre-marital sex. These remain the subject of inconclusive debate amongst Buddhist scholars and leaders. Some teachers may conflate their own values with the spirit of this precept which is really about no harmful carnal gratification. The precept does not make value judgement on social mores. Buddha would not have done that because if he had been totally strict about best practices, he would have insisted on celibacy (which he did for the monks). Sex in any sense of the word is about lust and gratification, which is the epitome of greed. But he recognised that sex and procreation are nature's forces for regeneration and it was neither practical nor feasible to preclude sex completely for the lay community.

Therefore, how could the rest of us nit-pick about right and wholesome sex as long as it is between two consenting and thinking adults? We would really be imposing our values on another. The advice on this is to go with your conscience. Go by the principle of empathy, i.e., just as you do not wish to be hurt, do not hurt another. If we push this empathy principle further, then, just as we would not wish to be judged, we should not judge another.

#### iv. About the Precept of No Falsehood

A statement is either factually true or it is not. If we knowingly and deliberately say that something is true when we know it is not, then regardless of intent or motivation, we have broken this precept.<sup>18</sup> What is commonly called a 'white' lie i.e., falsehood that supposedly causes no obvious harm to anyone, is still a lie. In fact, Buddha had told his son Rāhula not to lie, not "even as a joke".<sup>19</sup> He warned Rāhula that his entire monastic practice would be wasted if he "is not ashamed to tell a deliberate lie".<sup>20</sup> Buddha went as far as to say that "when one is not ashamed to tell a deliberate lie, there is no evil... that one would not do."<sup>21</sup>

Some might wonder why Buddha was so uncompromising about absolute and unblemished truth only. To answer this question, we should perhaps take a step back and ask ourselves this: what is our mental state when we feel the urge to fudge the truth? We might notice that behind every 'white' lie or half-truth is an unwholesome thought and mental state. Our motivation may not be dishonest or wicked but there is desire, fear or worry. We must learn to recognise how our mind spins stories to protect us, our self-image or just for convenience. Very often, we claim to be lying to help the other person: 'that he can't handle the truth', we say. But it is really about us. We do not want to deal with the unpleasantness or awkwardness that might greet the truth. We do not want to look bad with the other person. Therefore each 'white' lie is really a double whammy: lying to the other and lying to ourselves.

The other problem with shades of falsehood is that the mind has to actively make up stories. Too much of such constructions and the mind could be caught up in a warped labyrinth of lies and worse, eventually lose its ability to sieve fact from fiction. For practitioners, that would be disastrous. The mind is such a subtle object to observe and know. You need the best of conditions to discern the reality of its nature in accordance to the Dhamma and what is mind-made fabrication (*saṅkhāra*). When you have a habit of constructing fallacy, you might completely lose the ability to intuitively see the truth as it is (*yathābhūta ñānadassana*).

#### v. About the Precept of Avoiding Intoxicants Which Cause Heedlessness

Unlike the other four precepts, this fifth precept is unusual in that it is not immediately obvious why the mere consumption of intoxicants is a moral issue. A drunk or an addict may be criticised for being weak-willed, overly-indulgent and/or foolish, but unless he is also mean and cruel, he is unlikely to be labelled wicked or immoral. In fact, there is a story in the Buddhist (*Pāli*) canon of an alcohol-loving Sakyan by the name Sarakāṇi, who became a stream-winner, despite his love for drinks.<sup>22</sup> The fact that Sarakāṇi's alcohol had not stopped him from realising deep Dhamma insights and attaining the first stage of Buddhist sainthood should give us cause for pause and not jump to simplistic conclusions that observing this precept means we must all be teetotaler. It also suggests that the morality angle of this

precept is not so straightforward and we should perhaps take a nuanced position based on proper understanding and not simply because the precept says so.

Incidentally, not all intoxicants are of the same potency. Alcohol, for instance, generally does not dull the mind as swiftly and as devastatingly as illicit drugs or other dangerous and mind-altering addictive. Alcohol also enjoys social acceptance and is even seen as a desirable agent for social bonding, unlike the other intoxicants. It is also the only intoxicant consistently touted as delivering health benefits when taken in moderation.<sup>23</sup> For this reason, alcohol is the focus in this segment which seeks to lay down a reasonable and balanced way of observing this fifth precept.

The critical point about this precept is not intoxicant consumption per se, but the follow-on effects of intoxicants on the mind. Consumed to the 'right' (or more correctly 'wrong') level, intoxicants can and will dull the mind, impair judgement, reduce inhibition, diminish sense of shame, and cause behavioural problems amongst others for both the individual and society. The genesis of this precept would support the point that this precept is about heedlessness and not intoxicant consumption. We know that the precept was not part of lay moral code of conduct in the early days of the Buddha's dispensation. There were *suttas* where Buddha was quoted as advising his followers to abandon the "four defilements of action": taking life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct and lying.<sup>24</sup> The precept was likely to have been introduced after an infamous incident where a respected monk with incredible psychic powers unwittingly got absolutely drunk and passed out in front of a horrified assembly of monks, with his feet pointed at the Buddha. Just days before that, the inebriated monk had subdued a ferocious *naga* (a magical serpent). Buddha commented that in his drunken state, the monk could not subdue "even a salamander".<sup>25</sup>

Having said that, however, it should still be stressed that from the wording of the precept, it is quite clear that taking even a drop of alcohol is in breach of it, regardless of whether you become "heedless". If you enjoy the occasional drink and wish to continue, at least acknowledge that you are breaking this precept. But drinking per se does not make you immoral. Just be sure to stay well within sober limits, otherwise you could break the other precepts, and then you could be truly immoral.

However, if you are serious about upholding Dhamma practice, you should avoid all intoxicants including alcohol. This is because the key element of the practice is about understanding the mind, through direct and careful observation of how it works. It is already hard enough to catch mind's subtleties when one is sober, let alone trying to do that when there is even a modicum of alcohol swimming in the system.

A final sobering point about intoxicant is that it is highly addictive. Even if one is not yet addicted, the risk is always there. Addiction is craving at its extreme and thus a source of great suffering if out of control. It is wiser to avoid intoxicant altogether to avoid being caught in addiction's grip.

## **(B) The Ten Immoral Actions**

As mentioned earlier, upholding the five precepts is the least that a Buddhist should do with regards to avoiding actions that hurt others. In addition, Buddha also taught his followers to avoid the ten immoral actions.<sup>26</sup> To aid in remembering them, they have been categorised as follows, according to how they manifest:

- Three bodily actions – killing, taking things not given and sexual misconduct;
- Four verbal actions – false speech, harsh speech, slander and gossiping; and
- Three mental actions – covetousness, ill-will and holding wrong views.

### **i. Harsh Speech**

These are cruel words spoken with ill-will or in anger. Buddha described them as “rough, hard, hurtful”, “offensive”, “bordering on anger”, and “unconducive to concentration”.<sup>27</sup> Incidentally, harsh does not just mean loud, rough and scolding. As long as the underlying intent is to *wound*, the words qualify as harsh speech. Words of scorn, mockery and sarcasm spoken in the softest tone are also harsh speech.

For the victim of harsh speech, the damage is to his mind, diminishing his sense of self-worth and his confidence. But for the perpetrator, if he has a habit of scolding people, he may find that over time his temper flares up more quickly and it takes longer to calm down. Anger may become a default mental state which would be terrible because he will live in a perpetual state of ‘semi-boil’. He feels no joy or peace: just unpleasant, heavy, agitated and restless energy. The body develops high blood pressure, elevated heart rate and he is at risk of a heart attack or stroke.<sup>28</sup>

### **ii. Slander**

The intent of the slanderer is to divide. As Buddha had put it, “He speaks divisively. Having heard something, he repeats it elsewhere in order to divide... he is one who divides those who are united, a creator of divisions...”.<sup>29</sup> The slanderer seeks to damage another’s reputation and cause him to lose his standing and the goodwill of the world. The underlying motivation might be anger, such as for revenge or out of spite or greed so as to gain from another’s fall, which are all unwholesome goals.

While the slanderer will usually derive perverse pleasure and satisfaction when he succeeds in his malicious efforts, his delight is short-lived. The anger or greed that drives his slandering efforts do not just dissipate. If he is not careful, those negative mental states can and often become semi-permanent features in his mind and he will not have peace. He will be paranoid and he will perceive the world as hostile and treacherous.

### iii. Frivolous Talk

Buddha had described frivolous talk as “idle chatter”, “worthless, unreasonable, rambling and unbeneficial”, “contrary to the Dhamma and the discipline” and (spoken) at an inappropriate time.<sup>30</sup> Most chatters not concerning Dhamma and practice would probably fall under this.<sup>31</sup> One may wonder why Buddha was so strict about innocent chatter. On the surface, small talk and chit-chatting seem harmless. But there are two points to note. First, the mind of one engaging in frivolous talk is often driven by a desire for pleasure. It delights in the superficial, mindless and endless chattering. Second, engaging in them will cause the mind to expend effort and dissipate energy, leading to either restlessness and/or mental fatigue. A restless mind is unsettled while a fatigued one is heavy. Small talk and chatter are bad enough for the regular mind because they are energy sapping. But they are particularly problematic for practitioners and spiritual practice because they are hindrances to efforts to calm and still the mind.

### iv. Covetousness

The driving impetus of the covetous mind is greed. Covetousness is felt as a powerful desire for something whether tangible or intangible that belongs to another. Buddha described it as “full of longing” for “wealth and property of others”.<sup>32</sup> Again, one may derive perverse short-term satisfaction if he succeeds in getting what he desires. But such a mind is always discontent and unhappy, always comparing and wanting more. It is perpetually spinning in an endless cycle of craving, agitation, temporary gratification and more craving. It is in relentless dissatisfaction and *dukkha*.

### v. Ill-will or Hatred

Unlike the usual shot of anger that surges up because of a trigger but dissipates just as quickly, one with ill-will or hatred is in a constant state of unhappiness, hostility and pain. Anger is a default baseline for that mind. In a milder affliction, he is just always upset, finding fault, complaining, scolding and overall, a toxic presence to the people around. In the more extreme case, he wishes harm or death upon another.<sup>33</sup> That mind will have no peace and find no pleasure in anything or anyone. Ill-will is an exceedingly excruciating state for the mind.

### vi. Wrong View

The term ‘wrong view’ (*micchādiṭṭhi*) seems rather tame and innocuous. It may not be immediately obvious why holding ‘wrong view’ is as destructive as the other immoral actions. First off, it would be a gross mistake to perceive views as no more than just thoughts that swim innocently in our head. Views shape how we see the world, how we understand and react to events, what we value, and so on and so forth. Views condition and shape words and behaviour.



Buddha had said that one with wrong view believes that “There’s no meaning in giving, sacrifice, or offerings. There’s no fruit or result of good and bad deeds. There’s no afterlife. There’s no obligation to mother and father. No beings are reborn spontaneously. And there’s no ascetic or brahmin who is well attained and practiced, and who describes the afterlife after realizing it with their own insight.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, one who holds *micchādiṭṭhi* rejects the efficacy of *kamma*, does not believe in rebirth, places no importance on morality and moral obligations, and dismisses the importance of spiritual cultivation.<sup>35</sup> It is not unreasonable to expect that such a person would do as he pleases, without any moral restraint, and completely dictated by emotions, self-interests and desires. If his unwholesome (*akusala*) instincts are stronger than his capacity for goodness, his choices and actions would cause only more unhappiness, pain and suffering to himself and others.

## 2. Do Good and Purify Mind

Beyond avoiding evil is doing good. Buddha had taught how we should rise above our self-centred nature and territorial habits to show empathy and kindness for others. We should actively work to alleviate pain, and bring mental relief, comfort and happiness to all beings. Ultimately, however, just doing good is not enough. In our practice, we should purify our mind which means completely neutralising the three latent negative roots that burn in all of us: greed (*lobha*), anger (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*).

### (A) The Opposites of the First Four Precepts

The first set of activities pertaining to ‘doing good’ is performing the opposite of the first four precepts of ‘do no evil’ of the five precepts discussed earlier. They are as follows:

- Instead of taking life, we should respect and value life. As Buddha had put it, we should endeavour to be “conscientious, kindly and compassionate toward all living beings.”<sup>36</sup> We should cultivate empathy for all living beings, and treat them as we wish to be treated. Most of us are instinctively discriminatory in our treatment of other living beings. We identify with some and care for them, such as with most mammals but view other species with discomfort and even repugnance, particularly reptiles and insects. The former are usually treated kindly while the latter we often kill without batting an eyelid. If we respect and value life, we would assume that all living beings have an equal and inalienable right to life and we would not threaten them just for our own comfort, convenience and pleasure. We avoid killing not because we fear the boomerang of *kamma*, but because we feel empathy for all beings and respect their right to life.
- Instead of “taking things not given”, we give. The instinct of the worldling is to be concerned mainly with his and his loved ones’ well-being and interests. We have to work to overcome that narrow and petty fixation with parochial interests, set aside

the “me, mine and I” and make room for others’ welfare and interests. We learn to give with an open heart. Ideally, we share generously even at the expense of our own preferences, with anyone and everyone, i.e., including one’s worst enemy and at all times, not just when we are in a good mood. Now that is hard. (Note: Giving is covered at length in another Chapter entitled “Generosity” (*Cāga*).)

- The opposite of the third precept, no sexual misconduct, can be examined from two perspectives. The first is a literal reading and it is about ‘right’ sexual conduct. Instead of simply imposing our carnal desires on another whenever the ‘mood’ hits, we should exercise restraint and moderation in sex. Always respect the other person’s rights as much as we value ours. The second is a more thoughtful extrapolation of this precept. It is not just about sex and engaging in lustful sensual pleasures but about honouring relationships. We should endeavour to build a meaningful and lasting relationship with our partner, based on faithfulness, mutual respect, understanding, care and consideration.<sup>37</sup>
- The opposite of the fourth precept can be examined from two angles. The first is a narrow perspective about lies versus truths. In doing the right and wholesome thing, we should lead an upright and honourable life, clear in our mind about what is factual or not and devoted to upholding truth as is. We do not lie, not even to ourselves. We keep our promises and honour our word. The second is a broader definition of what is right speech, as opposed to lies being wrong speech. Buddha had listed several features of what constitutes right speech. It is not enough that the words are factually true. They should also be gentle, courteous and pleasing,<sup>38</sup> timely and beneficial to the listeners.<sup>39</sup> The intentions of the one speaking should be pure,<sup>40</sup> and by his skilful words he reconciles people, even *enemies*.<sup>41</sup>

## **(B) The Ten Meritorious Actions to be Encouraged**

Separately, Buddha had also identified ten actions which he termed as “meritorious”.<sup>42</sup> They are considered meritorious for two reasons. One, the act in themselves will benefit and improve the welfare of both oneself and others. And two, performing these acts with the right understanding and motivation would generate powerful wholesome mental states that lead to the mind being light, soft and joyous. In life, one is happy and at peace. In death, the mind is lifted into the heavens. The ten meritorious actions are as follows:

### **i. Giving (*Dāna*)**

This is altruistic giving with a joyous, open heart, with no expectation of return favours or even gratitude from the recipients. *Dāna* is an extremely important mental state. Buddha gave several talks to explain its importance to happiness in both the secular life and the success of spiritual pursuit. [Note: “Generosity” (*Dāna* and *Cāga*) is covered at length in an upcoming Chapter.]

## ii. Morality (*Sīla*)

Covered extensively in this Chapter.

## iii. Cultivation (*Bhāvanā*)

The term literally means “calling into existence”,<sup>43</sup> to become, to grow, to develop. *Bhāvanā* is often associated with ‘meditation’ in the sense of cultivating mindfulness (*sati*) and/or developing concentration (*samādhi*). But *bhāvanā* is more than just meditation. It is cultivating efforts to change our behaviour and character with understanding and growing wisdom so as to help the mind become naturally more peaceful and accepting, friendlier and kinder. The end result of *bhāvanā* is we become better, wiser and happier.

## iv. Showing Respect (*Apacāyana*)

This is often explained as showing respect to one ‘worthy’. But the original *Pāli* word had no qualifier about the recipient being ‘worthy’. Perhaps the qualifier was subsequently added to make it easier for one to show respect to another. *Apacāyana* does not mean going out of your way to behave deferentially or subserviently. If you are respectful only to people you deemed to be better than you, but dismissive or even contemptuous of those you deem to be of ‘lower station’ then you lack *apacāyana*. The key point about *apacāyana* is taming pride and ego and cultivating humility. In a state of *apacāyana*, one’s mind is endowed with all the qualities of wholesomeness: soft, gentle, pliable, warm and joyous.

## v. Helping Another (*Veyyāvacca*) or Doing Service

This act is about cultivating humility while fostering a giving mental state. We are setting aside our ego, feelings of likes and dislikes, and calculating instincts, and focused entirely on another’s welfare and well-being. Our contributions need not be grandiose. In fact, the more mundane and thankless the task, the more we should just pull up our sleeves and help. The end result of our ‘just do it’ attitude is a light and joyous mind, happy that it has successfully overcome an ego-centric resistance to be of selfless service.

## vi. Sharing Merits (*Pattidāna*)

This is commonly understood to be about performing a ritual to share the merits that one has accumulated from doing good deeds with loved ones who have passed away. Actually it is not quite like this, in that it is not about debit-credit store of merits to be shared around. When one experiences strong wholesome mental energies from doing good, those powerful mental states (e.g., joy, generosity, compassion and friendliness) can infect others and cause them to experience similar positive mental states.<sup>44</sup> We can thus actively project positive mental energies at any time and help lift the minds of others. In a similar vein, one should

take care to tame negative mental states (e.g., anger, avarice, jealousy, etc.) because they are also infectious except that they poison the general ambience and kill joy.

### **vii. Rejoicing at Another's Merits (*Pattānumodanā*)**

This is a joy that arises just from witnessing another performing a good deed. One would assume that *pattānumodanā* should be a breeze for most people. After all, there is really nothing to be done other than to be happy when another is doing good. But the reality is that the more common reaction from a casual onlooker is one of indifference; some may even react negatively or critically. This is because most of us are instinctively egocentric. It is hard to be enthused about an activity with no obvious benefit or relevance to us. If a mind is unhappy, angry or venal, it is even harder to experience *pattānumodanā*. That unwholesome mind might even spoil the joy for others with cynical or disheartening comments. *Pattānumodanā* comes easiest for one with empathy. His nature is likely to be warm-hearted and friendly, gracious and magnanimous; such a mind will rejoice in any wholesome deeds whether done by himself or others.

### **viii. Listening to Dhamma (*Dhammadesenā*)**

As long as we have not realised *Nibbāna*, there is always more to learn about the Dhamma. *Dhammadesenā* is critical to increasing our store of knowledge of the teachings. It will help to increase faith (*saddhā*) in the Triple Gems. We are reminded of the need to hold the line on *sīla* and perhaps seek out meditation to learn the skills of quietening the mind. We may be inspired to try to incorporate the teachings in daily life and when we do that diligently and successfully, our understanding of Dhamma will grow, and insight and wisdom will deepen.

### **ix. Teaching Dhamma (*Dhammasavaṇa*)**

Dhamma knowledge can be conveyed either in a formal lecture setting or informally with just family and friends. What is meritorious is not the setting of the delivery but our wholesome motivation and the content of the sharing. We must not be driven by ego or be caught up in gain and fame. Our objective in sharing Dhamma is to help another understand what Buddha had taught about the nature of reality and how to find mental relief from the stresses in life. We must also be careful that what we share is indeed Buddha's Dhamma and not something else. If need be, add a caveat that we are still learning so that our listeners will exercise care and critical thinking. This is as much to protect them as to allay our conscience.

*Dhammasavaṇa* is also learning in a different way. As we share, our mind is actively recalling and examining the Dhamma. We may find angles not evident to us before. The questions we receive may prompt us to think deeper. There could be new and more profound insights. Therefore, *dhammasavaṇa* can be even more enriching than learning on our own; as we help others, we are also helping ourselves.

## x. Clarifying Understanding of Dhamma (*Ditthijukamma*)

Dhamma is profound and difficult to put into words. This is because language is derived from worldly experiences and predefined meanings within a certain context while Dhamma is beyond the mundane, intellectual and conceptual world. If we are serious about learning Dhamma, seeking clarification from a wise teacher is critical to our progress. Minimally, *ditthijukamma* helps to keep our Dhamma understanding on track and correct. Investigative clarification done properly means the mind strikes the right balance between being open-minded and actively amassing and internalising knowledge while maintaining critical thinking and being able to reflect the information with wisdom. The mind thus juggles between listening and asking questions. It is receptive yet discerning, earnest but also sincere and humble. In this way, we will continue to grow in the Dhamma.

### (C) The Eight Precepts

Some of us even in lay life may choose to embrace a higher practice of moral restraint, i.e., the eight precepts instead of five. The primary motivation for observing eight precepts is to lead a simpler and more contented spiritual life, without the regular mind's fixation with vanity, comfort and indulgences. The eight precepts encompass all the five layman precepts with one change to the third precept: it upholds celibacy as opposed to merely restraining from sexual misconduct, and three additional abstinences.<sup>45</sup> The three additional precepts are:

#### i. Not "Eating Beyond the Time Limit"<sup>46</sup> (*Precept #6*)

That means fasting after mid-day. For the lay person who observes eight precepts on observance day, fasting allows him to have a very direct and impactful experience with the noble truths of *dukkha*<sup>47</sup>: how *dukkha* arises because of food craving and how *dukkha* ceases when the mind accepts the fasting and notes any arising hunger sensation without complaining. For the more serious practitioner, fasting is also about being practical. Man's habit of feeding his body throughout the day is time-consuming. By cutting back on the number of meals, he can devote more time to meditation and practice.

#### ii. Avoiding "Dancing, Singing, Instrumental Music and Unsuitable Shows; Wearing Garlands, Using Scents and Beautifying the Body with Cosmetics" – (*Precepts #7 and #8 combined in the Eight Precepts but they are separate in the Ten Precepts*)

These are forms of sense distraction and indulgence, and bodily accessories that please and inflate the ego. A serious practitioner should see the body objectively and not waste time and effort dressing it up to satisfy his ego and senses and delude him from reality.

### **iii. Not “Lying on High or Luxurious Sleeping Place” – (*Precept #9 in Ten Precepts*)**

This is not austerity for its own sake. It is about not indulging in one’s desire for creature comfort, and being content with simplicity and essentials. It is also not to create unnecessary conditions for a lazy, indulgent mind that steers away from practice.

Incidentally, Buddha did encourage his disciples to set aside a few days a month to observe the additional moral restraints and to cleanse the mind of defilements and bad habits.<sup>48</sup> They are called *uposatha* days.<sup>49</sup> Depending on culture and tradition, the number of *uposatha* days ranges from two to six days a month of the lunar calendar. The most common observance day are new moon and full moon days and the waxing and waning moon days.<sup>50</sup>

### **(D) The Ten Precepts**

Ten precepts are observed mainly by practitioners either leaning towards or already on the cusp of joining the Sangha, when they are prepared to renounce all forms of wealth and possession. This list is identical to the eight precepts with one addition:

#### **i. Not “Lying on High or Luxurious Sleeping Place” – *as above* (*Precept #9*)**

#### **ii. Refrain from Accepting “Gold and Silver” (i.e., Money) – (*Precept #10*)**

In principle, it means not possessing any kind of material resource that would allow one to make purchases and satisfy one’s desires. It is forced taming of mind’s wants in the strictest terms and to curb greed.

## [IV] PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING BUDDHIST MORALITY

For the thinking Buddhist, it is not enough to know what is good or bad, right or wrong and should this or should that not be done. It is just as important to understand why the moral code is so. By understanding the basis for *sīla*, we will know what is right and should be done under any circumstances without having to fret about the correct interpretation of precepts or to consult another.

Two key principles need to be highlighted as they underpin Buddha's teaching on *sīla*: empathy and spiritual utilitarianism.

### 1. Principle of Empathy

Buddha had taught that when considering whether an action is right or wrong, we should see things from the recipient's perspective. What we do not like, it is fair to assume that others would not either. What we like, they probably would as well. Therefore the point is to treat another, the way you would want to be treated.

The empathy principle underpins four of the five layman moral precepts, the ten unwholesome actions and several of the wholesome qualities mentioned earlier. For instance, on killing, Buddha had said that everyone wished to live and not die and everyone was "fond of pleasure and averse to pain". If we dread pain and value our life, then we should not inflict pain on another and intentionally deprive him of his life.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, just as you value your possessions and would experience pain or loss if you were to lose them, then you should not take another's belongings. You do not like being lied to, then do not lie to another. You do not like to be the object of gossip, slander, angry words and so on, then avoid subjecting others to the same. Be kind and considerate, show respect, be reasonable and gentle, and so on.

If we go by this empathy principle, we can probably resolve most moral dilemmas ourselves without having to consult another. For instance, let's examine some commonly asked 'controversial' questions. Should we tell someone who is dying the truth of his prognosis? Is a white lie acceptable? Should homosexuality be condemned? To answer these questions, simply pose them to yourself with the same questions: if you were dying, would you want to be told the truth? Would you accept being told a white lie? Would you want to be condemned for your sexual preferences? You know your answers. If you do not extend the same courtesy to others, then you are exercising double standards, aren't you? How can that be *sīla*?

## 2. Spiritual Utilitarianism

By spiritual utilitarianism, it means that an action is skilful, good and should be performed if it increases the well-being and happiness of you and others, and takes you closer to *Nibbāna*. Conversely, an action that brings pain and suffering to all and that takes you further away from *Nibbāna* is unskilful, bad and should be avoided. Buddha had advised his disciples to reflect as follows before undertaking any action: it should be avoided if it “leads to my own affliction, to other’s affliction, and to the affliction of both; it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from *Nibbāna*.”<sup>52</sup> In a similar vein and a touch of more detail, Buddha instructed his son, Rāhula, to reflect on his actions “like a mirror”, i.e., objectively, and to avoid any “unwholesome bodily action” that leads to “my own affliction or to the affliction of others”, and that comes “with painful consequences, with painful results”.<sup>53</sup>

One may protest and say if one is clueless about *Nibbāna*, how does one tell if an action will take one closer to or farther away from it?

That is a valid point. Therefore, for one new to the Dhamma or still struggling with understanding it, Buddha offered another perspective.<sup>54</sup> He said we would know for ourselves when we are feeling calm or agitated, happy or sad, content or troubled and so on. Intuitively we know that a peaceful state of mind is beneficial and pleasing while a shaky, restless and agitated one is painful and probably harmful. Therefore, undertake actions that lead to a calm and peaceful mind and avoid those that increase yearning, anger, restlessness and worry.

This principle of spiritual utilitarianism underpins the fifth of the five layman precepts, and the practitioner component of the eight and ten precepts as well as some of the meritorious actions mentioned above.



## [V] IMPORTANCE OF *SĪLA*

It has often been said that every religion teaches its followers to do good and avoid evil; and in that sense, every religion is similar. This is a simplistic assertion. It is true that broadly, the ethical part of the teachings are similar between religions, but the basis on which they are anchored is often very different. For most divinity-based religions, the basis for morality is straightforward. Whatever actions that God/gods dictate, those would count as good and must be performed. If the divine being says, 'you must not kill', then killing is bad and must be avoided. If the divine being say, 'you must make sacrifices', then regardless of whether you consider it intellectually sound or not, sacrifices must be 'good' and should be performed.

But the Buddha had taught that there is no creator God/gods who had laid down the moral code of conduct.<sup>55</sup> Then why are we concerned about morality? There are broadly at least three reasons which are unique to Buddhism:

- the law of *kamma*,
- the science of the mind and
- morality as a requisite condition for spiritual enlightenment and final attainment of *nibbāna*.

In other words, we observe *sīla* because we believe that our conscious choices will directly impact our happiness, our spiritual progress and eventually, the condition of future lives.

### 1. The Law of *Kamma*

Buddha had taught that any intentional action, i.e., *kamma*, whether expressed through body, speech, or mind, will leave an imprint on the mind. If one's motivation is positive and pure, the mind will experience happiness and other pleasant effects. Conversely, if one is motivated by greed, anger or other negative mental states, the mind will be adversely affected and one will experience pain.<sup>56</sup> Further, the more one thinks about something, the greater and deeper its impact on the mind.<sup>57</sup>

Buddha had explained that a lifetime of cruelty and persistent unwholesome mental activities would sear the mind terribly in this life and affect the conditions of rebirth and the life after. Buddha had also said that an immoral perpetrator could either be reborn in one of the lower realms, i.e., animal, hungry ghost or hell or if he is able to return as a human, his lifespan, health, physical appearance, economic and social status and even cognitive abilities would suffer,<sup>58</sup> i.e., below relative national average.

A short lifespan is due to a previous life of delighting in killing.<sup>59</sup> Note that Buddha did not say that a one-time act of killing would result in a short life. He said that if one "is murderous... given to blows and violence", i.e., if one has a propensity to kill and frequently

does it, his life will be short. Poor health is the result of a preceding life of regularly causing deliberate and cruel bodily hurt to others.<sup>60</sup> Ugliness stems from an “angry and irritable character”, easily roused to anger “even when criticised a little”, and openly displaying hostility, resentment and bitterness.<sup>61</sup>

A lifetime of stinginess could lead to extreme deprivation and poverty in the next life.<sup>62</sup> One who resents others when they receive honour and respect may not be able to gain respect in another birth.<sup>63</sup> A low-born social status could be the result of one being “obstinate and arrogant” and thus unable and unwilling to extend honour and homage to another who is worthy.<sup>64</sup> And finally, a mind which does not go beyond the mundane and material and absolutely refuses to contemplate higher thinking such as morality and spirituality may find itself descending into relatively lower intelligence in the next human birth.<sup>65</sup>

In a world that values science and empirical evidence, it is hard to accept rebirth, let alone the idea of *kamma* conditioning rebirth. Buddha offered a way out of our intellectual conundrum. He asked: what do we have to lose if we assume that *kammic* law is for real?<sup>66</sup> If it really is for real, playing by its rules would mean we will reap benefits. If it is not, there is no loss because observing morality will keep our mind light and happy, and we will be loved by the people around us. But if we assume that *kamma* does not exist when it does, then we will be in serious trouble. Any mindless and cruel indulgence and misdeeds will come back to literally haunt us.

Actually, there is no need to wait for the next life to see the effects of *kamma*. Even in this very life, you can witness the consequences. Look at the people we want to associate with. We want to be around people who are kind, considerate and jovial, who speak nicely and bring delight and comfort. We do not want to hang around those who are always annoyed and unhappy, always complaining and scolding and bringing angst to the world around them. Therefore the good people will have company and live happily while the mean and cruel will be lonely and miserable.

## 2. The Science of the Mind

Even if we remain unconvinced about *kamma*, there is still a good ‘scientific’ reason for upholding morality. Extensive research into the workings of the brain has shown that when one performs wholesome deeds, the brain actually releases higher levels of hormones and neurotransmitters such as endorphin, oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine which cause one to ‘feel good’, experience joy and happiness. The wholesome mind is peaceful and content, gentle and soft. One who is constantly engaged in giving and other altruistic, wholesome deeds would regularly experience very positive feelings. Structurally, his brain would also have constructed neural pathways that loop towards positive mental states.<sup>67</sup>

Conversely, current research shows the chemicals cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenaline are released for one who is angry.<sup>68</sup> The prefrontal cortex and hippocampus lose neurons

because of anger and elevated cortisol. If “angry moods” are allowed to dictate behaviour, there would be a constant supply of these fuels added to the brain and he ‘boils’.<sup>69</sup> Organically, the neural pathways will also angle towards negative mental states. The boiling will stop only if the temperature is lowered with forgiveness, gratitude, love, respect, care and consideration for another. Only wholesome mental states can effectively soothe anger and pain.<sup>70</sup>

In other words, neuroscience has proven that Buddha was right: mental experience is impermanent and conditioned. And doing good does bring happiness and doing evil does lead to pain.

### **3. Morality – For Spiritual Enlightenment and *Nibbāna***

For the practitioner seeking spiritual growth and enlightenment, being virtuous is non-negotiable. Buddha had explained that the practitioner must uphold *sīla* to be free from remorse and worry.<sup>71</sup> That clear conscience is a necessary condition for the arising of joy and tranquillity in the mind; only then can he meditate and still his mind. A quiet and still mind that is sharply aware and mindful is a pre-requisite for the practitioner to be able to see and understand how the mind works. Insight knowledge and realisation is a critical step paving the way for the mind to turn away from attachment and eventually realise *Nibbāna*.<sup>72</sup> *Nibbāna* is the ultimate state of unconditioned bliss that is the goal of every serious disciple of the Buddha.

## [VI] HOW TO DEVELOP SĪLA?

At the heart of *sīla* practice is learning to restrain one of three latent negative roots that underpin all evil actions: greed (*lobha*), anger (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). As long as any of these three states can still arise in us, we are capable of hurting and harming others; even taking lives, let alone stealing and lying. Those roots are the reason why sometimes, despite our best intentions, we are not able to fight our unwholesome urges. We do not want to get angry, especially not with loved ones, yet we will lash out when we are upset. We may subsequently regret the harsh words but in the heat of the moment, it feels so right to 'vent'. We do not want to binge but craving overwhelms our best intentions. Even the most dedicated Buddhists may find that given the 'right' conditions, they can and will succumb to unwholesome and harmful instincts.

Yet people do not run amok, burn and slash or simply wildly indulge as their feelings dictate. Why would the worldling, by and large, act with restraint and behave in accordance with social norms and legal code even when sometimes, he really wishes to do otherwise?

Buddha had explained that we act with some restraint because of two mental states, *hiri* and *ottapa*.<sup>73</sup>

- *Hiri* means moral shame or conscience. *Hiri* is a check from within ourselves. If our conscience pricks when we are performing an unwholesome action, that is *hiri* calling.<sup>74</sup>
- *Ottapa* is moral dread/fear (of repercussions of wrongdoing). We are held in check from wrongdoing because of fear of something external, such as punishment by the state, censure or shame from the public, disapproval from loved ones, and depending on your religious beliefs, *kammic* consequences or being punished by God/gods.<sup>75</sup>

Either *hiri* or *ottapa* will restrain one from doing wrong. But if one lacks both these mental qualities, then one is capable of the most heinous acts.<sup>76</sup> To strengthen *sīla*, one must therefore cultivate and strengthen *hiri* and *ottapa*.<sup>77</sup>

### 1. Strengthening *Hiri* (Conscience)

The following activities done regularly and with understanding, could help strengthen *hiri*:

## **i. Reinforce Empathy in Our Mind**

We must regularly reflect that we have much in common with all other living beings: stuck in the same *samsāra*<sup>78</sup> boat, seeking happiness, averse to pain, and having very similar physical, mental, emotional, spiritual needs. Such reflections might moderate our self-centredness and sense of entitlement. Then, perhaps we would be better able to see things from another's perspective, and act with more restraint when greed, anger, pride, fear, jealousy and so on, arises.

## **ii. Remind Ourselves of the Danger of Pandering to Negativities**

*Hiri* is a quiet and soft inner voice that is easily overwhelmed by strong mental states such as anger, pride or greed. Sometime *hiri* needs a little boost with sensible words. Therefore we tell ourselves, we will suffer if we constantly give in to negativities.<sup>79</sup> That once they become habits, it will get increasingly harder to control them, let alone reverse them. We basically talk ourselves into avoiding evil and doing good.

## **iii. Reflect on the Five Precepts**

We should make it a part of daily practice to remind ourselves of the five layman precepts. Recollect and reflect on the words and their meaning. You might want to recite it slowly so that you can be mindful of the essence of each precept. Do not do it because it is a duty. Do it because we sincerely want the reminder to help us act with moral restraint.

## **iv. Reflect on Mortality**

It would be most sobering if we successfully internalise in our mind that death is inevitable regardless of our power, status and wealth. Perhaps then, we will not be caught up in short term tactical gains and trivial delights such as winning an argument or satisfying the ego. We learn to value what is truly important which is that we have made the world a better place; that we have done good and not hurt others; and that we have loved and are loved. On our deathbed, we will look back at our life with contentment, be at peace and have no regrets.

## **v. Respect and Consult Wise Teachers<sup>80</sup>**

This is so that we may continue to learn about correct moral practices, be motivated to improve and not be confused about what is right or wrong. The words of wise teachers will leave a deeper impact on us and can pack a powerful boost to *hiri*.

## vi. Form Good Spiritual Friendship<sup>81</sup>

The most important gauge of what is a good spiritual friend is whether he has the wisdom to urge you to hold the moral line, or he pleases you by encouraging your desires even if they are unwholesome and will hurt your mind. A good friend thus would not feed your ego and instigate you to give in to anger or greed. He will be your voice of conscience if you are wavering in your *sīla*. He will remind you of the Buddha's teaching and encourage you to act with restraint, to moderate your demands and expectations and to forgive and let go. When you have actually acted rightly by your conscience but have foolish regret for whatever reason, a good friend will reinforce your moral conviction and keep you on track.

## 2. Deepening *Ottapa* (Moral Fear)

Buddha had taught that we can deepen *ottapa* with the following reflections:

### i. 'The State Will Punish Wrong-doers Severely'

This can be a powerful deterrence if we seriously consider the risk of being caught instead of assuming that we will get away. Buddha used to heighten the deterrence factor by listing the types of gruesome punishment that the ancient Indian states would inflict on the unfortunate convicted.<sup>82</sup>

### ii. 'There is No Escape from *Kamma*'

Buddha used to say that the evil-doer would suffer 'here and hereafter', i.e., death provides no escape and no relief. The evil doer could be reborn as an animal, a hungry ghost, or in hell. If the evil-doer takes a human rebirth, he will be in a much worse-off setting. Buddha even gave horrific details of the excruciating torture that awaits the hell beings for an inconceivably long time.<sup>83</sup> Conversely, for those who regularly perform wholesome acts, a heavenly rebirth awaits them.

### iii. 'There will be Public Censure'

In several *suttas*, Buddha pointed out that a man's social standing ultimately rests on his moral conduct and not so much on the other usual measures of success that the world values namely, wealth, fame, power, family connections, social status or even physical looks.<sup>84</sup> Buddha's observation about how *sīla* determines social standing still applies today. We get periodic reminders of how a person's reputation and standing within a community is destroyed when he is accused of a criminal offence or caught for immoral practices or bullying ways by social media vigilantes.

## [VII] GROWING IN *SĪLA* – THE IDEAL STATE

While we can all be taught to follow moral principles, ideally *sīla* should be anchored on understanding and wisdom so that it does not turn into foolish and self-righteous obligatory dos and don'ts that the zealot will use to inflict pain on the world. Paired with wisdom, *sīla* is imbued with only wholesome qualities that are concerned with everyone's well-being and happiness. It will be balanced and fair, and easy to follow because the good it delivers to society will be obvious.

When we uphold *sīla* sincerely, steadfastly and with understanding, by and by, *sīla* can become second nature to us and no longer an exercise in moral restraint. Our basic character and instincts will change. Greed, anger and delusion will diminish in strength. We become less judgemental, more accepting of others' fallacies and more forgiving. We feel more empathy and understanding for others, more compassionate and friendlier. In short, the *brahmavihārās*<sup>85</sup> (namely, friendliness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity) may become a way of life. As we become less caught up with our own desires, interests and self-importance, we should feel happier, calmer and more peaceful. Our conscience is clear. Daily living is joyous and dying will not be fearful. When death comes, we will just move on with lightness in our heart and be lifted to a heavenly rebirth.

Buddha's most ardent students, the Dhamma practitioners, go beyond just observing *sīla*. They strive to cultivate *virīya* or energy, which is an essential mental condition for spiritual progress and ultimate enlightenment. While *sīla* is concerned with being virtuous, *virīya* seeks to purge the mind of unskillful mental states that obstruct spiritual practice, including those that are not commonly considered immoral such as sensual enjoyment, perplexity, restlessness, worry or lethargy. Practitioners will try to ensure that their mind is pumped full of mental wholesomeness and skillfulness. If mindfulness slips and an unskillful mental state does arise, the moment they realise it, they will jam it in its track and drop it. Only a pristine mind can achieve that pure awareness necessary to see the mind as it is and understand Dhamma.

Ultimately, the perfect *sīla* is the domain of the Arahant, the most accomplished of the Buddhist saints. He has complete understanding of the nature of his mind and is thus liberated from all mind-made constructions and delusions. He will no longer experience any arising of craving for anything, mental or physical, for he has completely uprooted the roots of greed, anger and delusion that plague all other beings. His mind is so pure that not even in secret would he do wrong. The Arahant will abide in unconditioned bliss for as long as his life lasts. And when it ends, there is no more becoming.

- End of Chapter 2

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Narada, Thera. "Dhp 183" in *The Dhammapada: Pāli Text and Translation with Stories in Brief and Notes*. 4th ed. Taipei: Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1993. pp. 165.

<sup>2</sup> "Morality." In *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*. n.d. Accessed Aug 26, 2018.  
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/morality>.

<sup>3</sup> "Morality." In *Collins, Free Online Dictionary*. n.d. Accessed Aug 26, 2018.  
<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/morality>.

<sup>4</sup> Nibbāna is the state of being when the mind experiences liberation. The term literally means the unbinding of the mind from cankers and defilements that keep it shackled to rounds of rebirths. The term also connotes the extinguishing of fire: cooling, stilling, calming and peace. See "Nibbāna: nibbāna", edited by Access to Insight, Access to Insight (Legacy Edition, version ati-legacy-2013.12.21.11), 30 Nov 13,  
<http://www.accesstinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/sacca/sacca3/nibbana.html> .

<sup>5</sup> Narada, op. cit.. pp.165.

<sup>6</sup> See Brahmali, Bhante, for a concise explanation of greed (lobha), anger (dosa) and delusion (moha)  
<https://discourse.suttacentral.net/t/lobha-dosa-moha/4246/2> .

<sup>7</sup> Bodhi, Bhikkhu. "Streams" A 8:39 (9) in *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Āṅguttara Nikāya: Translated from the Pāli*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012, pp. 1173-1175.

<sup>8</sup> In the Pāli, the recitation is as follows: Pānāti-pātā veramanī sikkhā padaṃ samādiyāmi.

<sup>9</sup> Adinnā-dānā veramanī sikkhā padaṃ samādiyāmi.

<sup>10</sup> Kamesu micchā-carā veramanī sikkhā padaṃ samādiyāmi.

<sup>11</sup> Musāvadā veramanī sikkhā padaṃ samādiyāmi.

<sup>12</sup> Surā meraya-majja-pama-datthānā veramanī sikkhā padaṃ samādiyāmi. This is the literal translation from the Pāli.

<sup>13</sup> The Atthasālinī, composed in 5<sup>th</sup> century Sri Lanka, explained that an act is considered killing if five conditions are met: the being is alive; you know that (i.e., you are sane); you wish for its death; you actively sought it; and it died as you had intended. (From Tin, Pe Maung. "Courses of Immoral Action" Chap. 5 in *The Expositor (Atthasālinī): Buddhaghosa's Commentary on the Dhammasangani The First Book of the Abhidhamma Pitaka Vol 1*. edited and revised by Mrs Rhys Davids. London: Pāli Text Society, 1976, pp.129.)

<sup>14</sup> Bodhi, "The Destruction of Life" A 4:264 (1), *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Āṅguttara Nikāya*, op. cit., pp. 618.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., "Taking what is not given" A 10:265 (2), pp 618.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., "Aññatitthiya Sutta: Other Sects" A 3:68 (8), pp. 289-290; "Lust, friends, is slightly blameworthy but slow to fade away..."



<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, "Cunda" A 10:176 (10), pp. 1519; "He engages in sexual misconduct. He has sexual relations with women who are protected by their mother, father, mother and father, brother, sister, or relatives; who are protected by their Dhamma; who have a husband; whose violation entails a penalty; or even with one already engaged.". See also Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu & Bodhi, Bhikkhu translated. "Sāleyyaka Sutta: The Brahmins of Sālā" M 41 in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya: Translated from the Pāli*. 4th ed. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009, pp. 380; "He misconducts himself in sensual pleasures; he has intercourse with women who are protected by their mother, father, mother and father, brother, sister, or relatives, who have a husband, who are protected by law, and seen with those who are garlanded in token of betrothal."

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, "Cunda" A 10:176 (10), pp. 1519; "Here, someone speaks falsehood. If he is summoned to a council, to an assembly, to his relatives' presence, to his guild, or to the court, and questioned as a witness thus: 'So, good man, tell what you know,' then, not knowing, he says, 'I know,' or knowing, he says, 'I do not know'; not seeing, he says, 'I see', or seeing, he says, 'I do not see' Thus he consciously speaks falsehood for his own ends, or for another's ends, or for some trifling worldly end."

<sup>19</sup> Buddha told his son to train himself thus: "I will not utter a falsehood even as a joke.". See Ñānamoli & Bodhi, "Ambalatthikārāhulovāda Sutta: Advice to Rāhula at Ambalatthikā" M 61, *op. cit.*, pp. 524.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 523.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 524.

<sup>22</sup> Bodhi, Bhikkhu. "Sarakāni (1)" S 55:24 (4) in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya: Translated from the Pāli*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000, pp. 1811.

<sup>23</sup> Sobel, Ashley. "Can a Glass of Wine Benefit Your Health", Healthline, 27 Aug 19, <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/benefits-of-wine#benefits>.

<sup>24</sup> Walshe, Maurice translated. "Sigālaka Sutta: To Sigālaka Advice to Lay People" D 31 in *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*. London: Wisdom Publications, 1987, pp. 462. Also see Bodhi, "Kesaputtiya Sutta" A 3:65 (5), *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya, op. cit.*, pp. 281-282.

<sup>25</sup> This is the story of the monk Sāgata who was able to subdue a fierce nāga with his impressive psychic powers. The townspeople wanted to celebrate his feat with an offering and was advised by a group of rogue monks to give him alcohol. So on Sāgata's next alms round, every household offered him alcohol. He dutifully accepted the offering and drank till he collapsed drunk and had to be carried back to the monastery. There, at some point, he laid flat out with his feet pointed at the Buddha. Buddha called attention to his behaviour, and said that in that state, Sāgata could not subdue "even a salamander". Story in "The Bhikkhus' Rules: A Guide for Laypeople", compiled and explained by Bhikkhu Ariyesako, Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 17 Dec 13, <https://www.accesstinsight.org/lib/authors/ariyesako/layguide.html>. See also Pācittiya 51 in "Bhikkhu Pātimokkha: The Bhikkhus' Code of Discipline", translated from the Pāli by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. [http://www.dhammadatalks.org/ebook\\_index.html#/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/TheBuddhistMonasticCode\\_181215.epub](http://www.dhammadatalks.org/ebook_index.html#/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/TheBuddhistMonasticCode_181215.epub).

<sup>26</sup> Ñānamoli & Bodhi, *“Sammāditthi Sutta: Right View”* M 9, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

<sup>27</sup> Bodhi, *“Cunda” A 10:176 (10), The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, op. cit., pp. 1519.

<sup>28</sup> Staicu, Mihaela-Luminița & Cuțov, Mihaela. "Anger and health risk behaviors." *Journal of Medicine and Life* 3, no.4. (2010). pp. 372–375.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3019061/pdf/JMedLife-03-372.pdf> . See also Hendricks, LaVelle; Bore, Same; Aslinia, Dean & Morriss, Guy. "The Effects of Anger on the Brain and Body." *National Forum Journal of Counselling and Addiction* 2, no. 1. (2013).  
<http://www.nationalforum.com/Electronic%20Journal%20Volumes/Hendricks,%20LaVelle%20The%20Effects%20of%20Anger%20on%20the%20Brain%20and%20Body%20NFJCA%20V2%20N1%202013.pdf> .

<sup>29</sup> Bodhi, *“Cunda” A 10:176 (10), The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, op. cit., pp. 1519; *“He speaks divisively. Having heard something here, he repeats it elsewhere in order to divide [those people] from these; or having heard something elsewhere, he repeats it to these people in order to divide [them] from those. Thus he is one who divides those who are united, a creator of divisions, one who enjoys factions, rejoices in factions, delights in factions, a speaker of words that create factions.”*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1519-1520; *“He indulges in idle chatter. He speaks at an improper time, speaks falsely, speaks what is unbeneficial, speaks contrary to the Dhamma and the discipline; at an improper time he speaks such words as are worthless, unreasonable, rambling and unbeneficial.”*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, *“Non-Dhamma (2)” A 10:172 (6), pp. 1515; “Idle chatter is non-Dhamma; abstention from idle chatter is the Dhamma. The numerous bad unwholesome qualities that originate with idle chatter a condition: these are harmful. The numerous wholesome qualities that reach fulfilment by development with abstention from idle chatter as condition: these are beneficial.”*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, *“Cunda” A 10:176 (10), pp. 1520; “Here, someone is full of longing. He longs for the wealth and property of others thus: ‘Oh, may what belongs to another be mine!’”*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1520; *“He has a mind of ill will and intentions of hate thus: ‘May these beings be slain, slaughtered, cut off, destroyed or annihilated!’”*

<sup>34</sup> This version is a translation by Sujato, Ajahn in <https://suttacentral.net/an10.176/en/sujato> Another version by Bodhi reads as follows: *“He holds wrong view and has an incorrect perspective thus: ‘There is nothing given, nothing sacrificed, nothing offered; there is no fruit or result of good and bad actions; there is no this world, no other world; there is no mother, no father; there are no beings spontaneously reborn; there are in the world no ascetics and brahmins of right conduct and right practice who, having realised this world and the other world for themselves by direct knowledge, make them known to others.’”* See Bodhi, *“Cunda” A 10:176 (10), The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, op. cit., pp. 1520.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1520.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1521. See also Bodhi, Bhikkhu translated. *“Loving-Kindness (Metta Sutta)” Sn 1.8 in The Suttanipāta: An Ancient Collection of the Buddha’s Discourses Together with its Commentaries: Translated from the Pāli*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2017, pp. 179-180.

<sup>37</sup> Walshe, “Sigālaka Sutta: To Sigālaka Advice to Lay People” D 31, op. cit., pp. 467.

<sup>38</sup> Bodhi, “Cunda” A 10:176 (10), *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, op. cit., pp.1521; He “speaks such words as are gentle, pleasing to the ear, and lovable, as go to the heart, are courteous, desired by many, and agreeable to many.”.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1522; “He speaks at a proper time, speaks truth, speaks what is beneficial, speaks on the Dhamma and the discipline; at a proper time he speaks such words as are worth recording, reasonable, succinct and beneficial.”.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1522; “He is of goodwill and his intentions are free of hate thus ‘May these beings live happily, free from enmity, affliction and anxiety!’”.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1521; He “is one who reunites those who are divided, a promoter of unity, who enjoys concord, rejoices in concord, delights in concord, a speaker of words that promote concord.”.

<sup>42</sup> Ñānamoli & Bodhi, “Sāleyaka Sutta: The Brahmins of Sālā” M 41, op. cit., pp. 379-385.

<sup>43</sup> Nyanatiloka, Mahathera. *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, 1952. Revised and reprint, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1988, pp. 67.

<sup>44</sup> Acharya, Sourya, & Shukla, Samarth. *Mirror neurons: Enigma of the metaphysical modular brain*. *Journal of Natural Science, Biology, and Medicine* 3, no .2 (2012). pp. 118–124. <http://doi.org/10.4103/0976-9668.101878> .

<sup>45</sup> Bodhi, “In Brief” A 8:41 (1), op. cit., pp. 1176-1178. See also, “In Detail” A 8:42 (2), pp. 1178-1180; “It is possible, bhikkhus, for a woman or man who observes the Uposatha complete in these eight factors, with the breakup of the body, after death, to be reborn in the companionship with... (in heavenly realms)”.

<sup>46</sup> I am using Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation from “Going for Refuge & Taking the Precepts”, by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 1 Dec 13, <https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/wheel282.html> .

<sup>47</sup> Dukkha has often been translated as suffering but it actually means the entire range of negative and unpleasant experiences from mild discontent and dissatisfaction to the more extreme pain and agony. See “Dukkha”, edited by Access to Insight, Access to Insight (Legacy Edition, version ati-legacy-2013.12.21.11), 5 Nov 13, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/dhamma/sacca/sacca1/dukkha.html> .

<sup>48</sup> Bodhi, “Uposatha” A 3:70 (10), op. cit., pp. 294-303.

<sup>49</sup> “Uposatha Observance Days”, edited by Access to Insight. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 Nov 13, <http://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/dhamma/sila/uposatha.html> . See also Horner, I.B. with supplementary translation by Bhikkhu Brahmali, “Observance” Kd 2.1.2. in *Book of Discipline Vinayapitakam*. published by SuttaCentral 2014. pp. 1525. <https://suttacentral.net/pli-tv-kd2/en/horner-brahmali> .

<sup>50</sup> “Uposatha” In Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia. n.d. Accessed 26 Aug 18. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uposatha> .

<sup>51</sup> See Bodhi, “*Veḷudvāreyya Sutta: The People of Bamboo Gate*” S 55:7 (7), *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, op. cit., pp. 1796-1799, “Here, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘I am one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die; I desire happiness and I am averse to suffering. Since I am one who wishes to live... and am averse to suffering, if someone were to take my life, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to take the life of another—of one who wishes to live, who does not wish to die, who desires happiness and is averse to suffering—that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either. What is displeasing and disagreeable to me is displeasing and disagreeable to the other too. How can I inflict upon another what is displeasing and disagreeable to me?’”. Also see Ñānamoli & Bodhi, “*Ambalatthikārāhulovāda Sutta: Advice to Rāhula at Ambalatthikā*” M 61, op. cit., pp. 524-525. “‘This action that I am doing with the body does not lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it is a wholesome bodily action with pleasant consequences, with pleasant results,’ then you may continue in such bodily action.”.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, “*Dvedhāvitakka Sutta: Two Kinds of Thought*” M 19, pp. 208.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, “*Ambalatthikārāhulovāda Sutta: Advice to Rāhula at Ambalatthikā*” M 61, pp. 524.

<sup>54</sup> For more details, see Bodhi, “*Kesaputtiya Sutta*” A 3:65 (5), *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya*, op. cit., pp. 281-282.

<sup>55</sup> It is not that there are no gods in Buddhism. In fact, the Buddhist pantheon has numerous gods known as devas. Those devas were once humans who had done much good in their previous lives and upon death have been reborn into more exalted existence. But like humans, they are also governed by the law of nature: they don’t set the rules. They do not live forever. Their lifespan is determined by the heavenly realm they were born into: the higher the realm, the longer they live. But upon reaching the expiry date of that realm, they will pass away and be reborn according to their kammic conditions.

<sup>56</sup> Narada, “*Dhp 1*” and “*Dhp 2*”, op. cit., pp. 1-4.

<sup>57</sup> Ñānamoli & Bodhi, “*Dvedhāvitakka Sutta: Two Kinds of Thought*” M 19, op. cit., pp. 208-209.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, “*Cūlakammavibhanga Sutta: The Shorter Exposition of Action*” M 135, pp. 1053-1057.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1053.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1054.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1055.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1055-1056.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1055.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1056.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1056-1057.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, see “*Apannaka Sutta: The Incontrovertible Teaching*” M 60, pp. 510-511.

<sup>67</sup> Hanson, Rick with Mendius, Richard. *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love and Wisdom*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2009. pp. 38; "When these "pleasure chemicals"—natural opioids (including endorphins) oxytocin, and norepinephrine—surge into your synapses, they strengthen the neural circuits that are active, making them more likely to fire together in the future."

<sup>68</sup> Society For Neuroscience. "Brain Chemicals Involved In Aggression Identified: May Lead To New Treatments." *ScienceDaily*. Accessed Sept 2, 2018.  
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/11/071106122309.htm> .

<sup>69</sup> A similar point was made by Buddha. See Ñānamoli & Bodhi, "Dvedhāvitakka Sutta: Two Kinds of Thought" M 19, op. cit., pp. 208; "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 cruelty, he has abandoned the thought of non-cruelty to cultivate the thought of cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of cruelty."

<sup>70</sup> This was also said by the Buddha. See Narada, "Dhp 5", op cit., pp. 8; "Hatred never cease through hatred in this world; through love alone they cease. This is an eternal law."

<sup>71</sup> Bodhi, "What Purpose?" A 11:1 (1), *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, op. cit., pp. 1553; "Ānanda, the purpose and benefit of wholesome virtuous behavior is non-regret." Also see Bodhi, "Proximate Cause (1)" A 11:3 (3), pp. 1555-1557.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., "What Purpose?" A 11:1 (1), pp. 1554; "... the purpose and benefit of the knowledge and vision of things as they really are is disenchantment; the purpose and benefit of disenchantment is dispassion; and the purpose and benefit of dispassion is the knowledge and vision of liberation." See also Ñānamoli & Bodhi, "Rathavināṭa Sutta: The Relay Chariots" M 24, op. cit., pp. 244; "... purification of knowledge and vision of the way is for the sake of reaching purification of knowledge and vision; purification by knowledge and vision is for the sake of reaching final Nibbāna without clinging."

<sup>73</sup> Bodhi, "Bright" A 2:9 (9), *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, op. cit., pp. 143; "Bhikkhus, these two bright qualities protect the world. What two? Moral shame and moral dread. If these two bright qualities did not protect the world, there would not be seen here [any restraint regarding] one's mother, aunts, or the wives of one's teachers and [other] respected people. The world would become promiscuous, like goats and sheep, chicken and pigs, dogs and jackals. But because these two bright qualities protect the world, there is seen here [restraint regarding] one's mother, aunts, or the wives of one's teachers and [other] respected people."

<sup>74</sup> Ñānamoli & Bodhi, "Sekha Sutta: The Disciple in Higher Training" M 53, op. cit., pp. 462; "He has shame; he is ashamed of misconduct in body, speech, and mind, ashamed of engaging in evil unwholesome deeds. He has fear of wrongdoing; he is afraid of misconduct in body, speech, and mind, afraid of engaging in evil unwholesome deeds."

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pp. 462. "He has fear of wrongdoing; he is afraid of misconduct in body, speech, and mind, afraid of engaging in evil unwholesome deeds."

<sup>76</sup> Ireland, John translated. "Sukkadhamma Sutta: The Bright Protectors" Iti 2.15 in *The Udāna and the Itivuttaka: Two Classics from the Pāli Canon*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, published in 1997, reprinted 2007, pp. 138. See also Bodhi, "True Knowledge" A 10:105 (5), *The Numerical*

*Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, op. cit., pp. 1486; “Bhikkhus, ignorance—accompanied by moral shamelessness and moral recklessness—is the forerunner in entering upon unwholesome qualities...”.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, Bodhi, “Moral Shame” A 7:65 (1), pp. 1070; “... for one deficient in a sense of moral shame and moral dread, restraint of the sense faculties lacks its proximate cause. When there is no restraint of the sense faculties, for one deficient in the restraint of sense faculties, virtuous behaviour lacks its proximate cause...”.

<sup>78</sup> *Saṃsāra* literally means faring on. Used here, it means the cycle of life and death continuing indefinitely until the realisation of Nibbāna. See “Samsara”, by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 5 Jun 10, <http://www.accesstinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/samsara.html>.

<sup>79</sup> Bodhi, “Unafraid of wrongdoing” S 16:2, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya: Translated from the Pāli*, op. cit., pp. 664; “And how, friend, is he afraid of wrongdoing? Here, friend, a bhikkhu becomes afraid at the thought: ‘If unarisen evil unwholesome states arise in me, this may lead to my harm’; ... and at the thought: ‘If wholesome states that have arisen in me cease; this may lead to my harm.’” See also, Bodhi, A 2:12 (2), *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, op. cit., pp. 144. “Here, someone reflects thus: ‘Bodily misconduct has a bad result in the present life and in the future life; verbal misconduct has a bad result in the present life and in the future life; mental misconduct has a bad result in the present life and in the future life.’ Having reflected thus, he abandons bodily misconduct and develops bodily good conduct; he abandons verbal misconduct and develops verbal good conduct; he abandons mental misconduct and develops mental good conduct; he maintains himself in purity. This is called the power of reflection.”.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, “Wisdom” A 8:2 (2), pp. 1112-1113; Buddha said, “As he is living in dependence on the Teacher..., toward whom he has set up a keen sense of moral shame and moral dread, affection and reverence, he approaches them from time to time and inquires: ‘How is this, Bhante? What is the meaning of this?’ Those venerable ones then disclose to him what has not been disclosed, clear up what is obscure, and dispel his perplexity about numerous perplexing points. This is the second cause and condition that leads to obtaining wisdom fundamental to the spiritual life...” See also Bodhi, “Udayi” S 46:30 (10), *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, op. cit., pp. 1588-1589.

<sup>81</sup> Bay, Sylvia. *ebook on Faith (Saddha)*, Singapore, May 2018, pp. 23-24. <http://dawningofdhamma.wixsite.com/dhammaroadmap/books>.

<sup>82</sup> Ñānamoli & Bodhi, “Bālapandita Sutta: Fools and Wise Men” M 130, op. cit., pp. 1016-1017.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1017-1019.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, see “Assalayana Sutta: To Assalayana” M 93, pp. 768 and “Esukari Sutta: To Esukari” M 96, pp. 787-788. Also see Walshe, “Sonadanda Sutta: The Qualities of a True Brahmin” D 4, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

<sup>85</sup> The four mental states that Buddha had called *brahmavihara* (noble way of living) are friendliness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), empathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkha*). Bodhi, “Loving-Kindness (1)” A 4:125 (5), *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, op cit., pp. 507-509