

# On Forgiveness

In our monastery, after evening chanting, we always take time for forgiveness. We ask for forgiveness for any mistakes we've made in our bodies, by our speech and in our minds throughout the day.

We start by asking forgiveness from the Buddha and then from other Sangha members. This practice involves both asking for and granting forgiveness. At the end of this ceremony, our head monastic wishes happiness and the attainment of Nibbana for all participants. Yes, forgiveness is for our own happiness and liberation.

When we discuss forgiveness, the usual issue is about letting go of our resentments towards the behaviour and actions of others we don't appreciate or causes us pain.

We discuss the whys and hows of extending forgiveness towards others, however, there seems to be much less discussion concerning asking for forgiveness of our own faults. I think if we are ready to start acknowledging our own faults and asking forgiveness for ourselves, that action makes our readiness to forgive others a lot easier.

So firstly, let us talk about asking forgiveness for our own faults.

When we ask forgiveness, it's not for justification but for finding peace within our hearts and the hearts of others through a mutual understanding on the reality of limited human conditions.

What this essentially means, is that we acknowledge to ourselves and to others that despite our best wishes and efforts to be

faultless and impeccable in our conduct, perfection isn't possible in human nature and there will always be cracks and leaking halls in our life. It's this inherent general condition in human life that the Buddha designated as Dukkha.

Once we understand this, we can ask for forgiveness and forgive ourselves instead of denying our mistakes, justifying them, or burdening ourselves with guilt. With this understanding and attitude, we can also forgive others much more easily.

Actually what else can we do instead of forgiving others? Do we carry resentment and desires for revenge with us throughout our lives? No, that's not the way! For your own mental well-being, it's not helpful at all. When you throw the stone of hatred at others in an act of revenge for their misbehaviour, you will burn your hand first. Because the stones of hatred and anger are like burning red coals as the Buddha described.

Here is another well-known quote from the Buddha on forgiveness and non-hatred:

"He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me." Those who hold onto such thoughts do not cease their hatred. "He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me." Those who do not hold onto such thoughts cease their hatred.

Hatred is never appeased by hatred; it is only appeased by non-hatred. This is an eternal law. (Dhammapada Verses 3.4.5)

There is no doubt that forgiveness and compassion are the essential answers for breaking the cycle of hatred and above all, for our own mental well-being. As I mentioned earlier, by deepening our understanding of our limited human condition, we become more capable of forgiving ourselves and others.

Many of you may be familiar with loving-kindness meditation and chanting, where we generate loving-kindness energy for ourselves and others. To make these practices more effective and genuine, it is crucial to grasp the nature of Dukkha in life—the limited human conditions that sometimes lead us to unskillful actions and mistakes.

In addition, I would like to share a helpful mindset for forgiving others. Whenever someone insults, abuses, or disappoints us, we should view them as teachers for our Dhamma practice. It is easy to be kind to those who treat us well, but it is challenging to forgive and maintain kindness when someone brings difficulties to us. However, let us take such cases as opportunities and lessons to help us grow in our practice.

I understand that it's not easy, but with consistent mindfulness practice and deepening understanding, it will become easier and easier.

Try our best

With metta  
Bhante Anuttara