

Morning Meditation: Resolution

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 3 min read

The final part of the morning practice is the act of resolution. Resolution, resolve, determination are all part of the second step of the Eightfold path – Right Attitude or Right Intention. If vipassana brings Right Understanding and Metta turns that into Right Attitude, then the act of resolution reinforces both and commits us to a day of determined commitment to Buddhaddhamma. I say a day, because one day at a time is quite enough. To determine something for a week is possible, but for a month that resolve dissolves unless reinforced. And to determine for a year can be depressing! One day, this day, is feasible. Take care of the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves! It is often the case in our lives that we take on certain commitments and then fail to reinforce their intentions. The situation begins to move away from us and we lose it. A marriage vow given to witnesses lasts that day. From then on presumption leads to laziness and carelessness, and disagreements and annoyances may grow to wither the original vow. Our commitment to the work we do unless reinforced with daily commitments allows original enthusiasm to slip into apathy. Even more so with the Dhamma, for the Dhamma is constant in its demands and relentless in its labours. It's no easy thing to grow spiritually. The Buddha warned us this is a 'gradual path'. What is a resolution then? To understand the role of intention, an intentioned intention, we need to understand Dependent Origination and how we create our own conditioning and kamma. An intention is an idea or thought laced with desire. It may be wholesome or unwholesome, but at the point of intention no karmic act had been performed. To hold an intention long enough so that we can determine its ethical value is to give us the only real choice we have. I say 'choice' tentatively for who in their right mind would choose to do something that leads to unhappiness. Once we have agreed to make that choice we have identified with it. This is what 'I' am going to do. There is still no karmic act. Only when that choice manifests into action of sustained thought, speech or deed, do we create a kamma (the technical Pali word in Theravada). What was it that made manifest a desire, that brought something out of potential into the actual. That force is the will and that is what the Buddha calls kamma. Now the original intention will have a lot of stored up energy depending on habitual action or indeed addiction. Anything compulsive - eating, watching TV, talking and talking - are all habits that are hard to tame because of their accumulated energy. On the other hand it may be that acts of generosity, of service, of truthfulness, of commitment are weak in energy because they have not been developed through beneficial habit. So a habit in itself is not the problem. It's the purpose and content of the habit that we need to be clear about. And of course it is a collection of these habits that we call our personality and character and it is this that determines our destiny. So if we see we are going in the wrong direction, we need to undermine those unskillful, perhaps immoral habits and if we see ourselves following a wholesome, virtuous way then we should reinforce those habits. That re-enforcement begins with the resolution. And a good time to make a resolution is just

then at the end of our morning practice. One should be to further our virtue and the other should be to undermine unskilful habits. Today, just this day, I will practice ... live mindfully ... with a good heart ...'Today, just this day, I will not ... won't go down that road ... refuse to ...'And, of course, one has to repeat these as often as one can throughout the day, but definitely when occasions arise to demand your resolution. Make them easy to attain so that you can congratulate yourself every evening and you will slowly grow from strength to strength. This is especially true of New Year Resolutions! And don't be put off by the occasional collapse into old ways. As Ginger Rogers admonished Flatfoot Fred in *Swing Time*, 'Take a deep breath, pick yourself up, dust yourself off and start all over again!'

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