

Relationships

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

Our lives are spent mainly in the company of the others and doing things. If we can rate our happiness by our relationships, perhaps we are on a surer footing. When people enter into a relationship, it always has some purpose beyond the present gratification. It has a long term aim. It may be a simple friendship – friends who meet to shop, to walk, to talk. Some may form a partnership to set up a business, or a charity. It may be quite a small enterprise or just getting together to help someone. We may form deeper relationships as partners and spouses, as parents and guardians of children. These are much longer term commitments. Such relationships are never ‘happy’ from start to finish. After the first flush of joy, the work starts to ‘make it work’. And at times it can be very difficult as we find the other has different ideas, different aims and so on. When it comes to marriage, two out of three fail. Some may judge this as a measure of our ‘broken society’. But considering how difficult it is for individuals to be together, we should instead marvel that so many continue lifelong. Working with the other through difficult patches makes for a deeper relationship. The deeper our relationships, the more nourishing they are. The Buddha tells us that sometimes we do things that are good for ourselves, at other times, good for others and at others good both for ourselves and others. On a visit to a small group of three monks, the Buddha asks the head monk how it is they live so peacefully with each other. Ven. Kassapa replies that every morning he says to himself, ‘What if I put aside what I want to do and do what the others want to do.’ We can see the wisdom in this approach. It allows us to loosen our grip on tightly held plans and ideas and allows the other to feel free to express theirs. Of course, for this to work, all involved must have the same attitude. This is such a wonderful skillful means the Buddha offers us. To put aside what we want to do until we have found out what the other/s wants to do, is an act of generous love. Even at times when we have to agree to differ, this attitude supports co-operation and undermines resentment.

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