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In the course of your life, if you cannot meet someone who is superior to or, at least, on a par with you in terms of good nature, you might as well decide to walk alone.

If you associate yourself with an ill-natured person, you will be adversely affected, because your mind unconsciously copies this person's heart. It would not be possible to nurture with this person the kind of friendship that raises each of you up as you walk along.

Verse 61, *Dhammapada*,

As we saw in Lesson 2: Grow Up, Buddha says one should “just walk alone like the lone horn of a rhinoceros.” In the current verse, too, Buddha says you should not travel your path with someone who is not superior to or, at least, equal to you.

What does Buddha mean by someone who is superior or at least equal to you? Simply put, this means a partner with a better nature than yourself.

It refers to someone whose mental properties are superior to yours, such as stronger self-control, a more mild-mannered personality, and a more flexible mind. A very rough guideline for detecting such a person might be “someone with whom you can relax together.”

When you talk or just spend time with someone whose thinking is much more clear-cut than yours, your turbulent mind calms down under his influence, and you will find yourself relaxed. Also, as you converse with this person, it often happens that you notice previously unnoticed problems, making you realize what small things have been bothering you—and this makes you feel good. No matter how seriously you are troubled, any trouble can be reduced to a simple matter when you get to the bottom of it. People tend to twist and turn this simple matter this way and that in their minds, thus molding it into a highly complicated problem. This process should be described as drudgery in one's mind. And it is the good person who can liberate you from this labor.

The opposite can be said about an ill-natured person. An illogical person with

an uncultivated mind enjoys conflicts with others. His mind is trapped by delusions, which makes him a confused person. He is not capable of understanding reasons.

When you share your worries with this kind of person, all you get is his own theory or an argument that is totally off the mark, making the problem even more complicated. Associating yourself with this type of person makes all kinds of noises run through your own mind, so that you become more confused and unreasonable.

Imagine yourself in the midst of an agonizing moment of not knowing what to do or how to cope with a situation. When, during this period, you meet someone who dramatically says, “Yes, yes, I know exactly how you feel,” or “Isn’t it agonizing to be like that,” you will be far from being comforted. On the contrary, these comments make you wonder if these people really understand your situation. Some of the comments may even make you angry.

It is not whether he/she is knowledgeable or highly educated that matters. What matters is whether this person has a clear mind or not.

The Truly Logical Person Has a Clear Mind

It seems safe enough to say that a clear mind is synonymous with being logical.

The problem is, however, that behind persons who are regarded as logical there generally lies an aggressiveness or an urge to push through their own views that drives them to defeat others in arguments.

We often encounter a person who is too eager to persuade others that his view is indeed the only correct view. This person makes free use of rhetoric that at a glance appears to be logical. This person also likes big words. Arguments in which others can detect these signs of ego and self-consciousness are very unpleasant to hear.

Generally speaking, it seems that “a logical person” or “an argumentative person” is always associated with the somewhat negative image of someone who is a bit of a nuisance.

Why, then, is a logical person a bit of a nuisance? It is because he takes the trouble of mustering all kinds of unnecessary theories to preach what others are not even interested to hear. His argument sounds like a bunch of “unnecessary theories” because he talks more than necessary.

The description “a logical mind” refers, at its origin, to an ability to sort out

what appears to be a complex problem into simple and concise matters. That being the case, the argumentative person is disliked in Japan not because he is logical but because he is showy of how much he knows. He is so eager to make himself look good and impose his view on others that he simply demonstrates all the knowledge he has. In the process, he creates a highly obscure argument that fails to acknowledge the relations, vertical relationship, causal relations, or rules among the relevant factors.

Logic is basically a very simple thing, totally devoid of any ego or sentiment. As such, logic has the function of making audiences feel clearheaded and comfortable.

Therefore, an argument by a person with a clear mind is always simple and totally devoid of an unnecessary obsession to defeat others in argument. Such a person is a person with a calm mind. His simplicity is underpinned by his ability to command a bird's eye view on things and to instantly sort out their causal relations, i.e., what are the causes and what are their consequences.

You should not choose a fool for your life-long friend or partner.

Thus, generally speaking, it appears that those who sound argumentative are loathed, while those who quibble are looked down on. While it might be only natural to slight these attitudes, are we not also discarding an important virtue of "being logical" together with these idiosyncrasies?

Everybody must have benefitted from logics or logical thinking at one time or another, including when one experiences a sense of satisfaction from the logical reorganization of the essence of highly complex matters.

On the other hand, you must feel bewildered and uncomfortable when you hear or witness something that does not seem logical or coherent.

Oftentimes in your day-to-day life, you encounter people who like to beautify their sayings with inscrutable literary rhetoric and unnecessary frills. Being worried that they may be saying something tedious or even wrong, those people must have developed a habit of resorting to complicated rhetoric in order to cover up deficiencies. If that is indeed the case, their arguments are not only illogical but also complicated, making audiences all the more bewildered.

As a practitioner of Buddhism, I feel stiff in my shoulders whenever I come across a philosophy book that is full of unnecessary twists and turns of ideas. This is, I believe, because the complicated data processing required to read this

kind of book imposes a burden on me.

In this sense, it seems advisable to stay away as much as possible from those who have been trapped in interpersonal relations and/or a state of confusion that requires complicated data processing.

If you must work with this kind of person or simply spend time with him, you must put up guards to block his noises or influences and protect your mind.

And, when you have the choice, you should at least make sure you do not choose a fool as your life-long friend or partner.

In a Christian wedding, the bride and groom exchange vows including:

I take you to be my lawful wedded wife/husband,
To have and to hold,
For better or for worse,
For richer or for poorer,
In sickness and in health, to love and to cherish . . .

While it might be easy to love, cherish, and remain faithful to your wedded partner when he/she is better, richer, and in good health, chances are he/she is more often in a state of “worse, poorer, and in sickness.” And I submit it is in these situations that “sharing of suffering” becomes even more decisively important in choosing your life-time partner and friend.

Of course, one can also retain pleasant memories of fun times. But it is when you are saved from distress by your partner, when you have to strive for your partner in distress, or when you feel that you can hang on a little more because of your partner that you find the presence of your partner truly precious.

Occasionally, you are capable of helping your partner in distress. Occasionally, on the other hand, your partner can help you when you are in trouble. This is company that is worthy of being called your friend. In order to obtain such a partner, you must cultivate an ability to “accommodate” your partner. This ability allows you to discern the causal relationship, i.e., what causes his problem and what kind of situation he is in as the consequence. And this “ability to accommodate” cannot be separated from logical thinking.

Unless you can sort out the causal relations behind your partner’s agony, you can never accommodate him/her in the true sense.

Lesson 12: Do Not Tell a Lie

Never tell a lie nonchalantly to others wherever you are and whoever you are with.

By saying something that is not true, a contradiction is born in your mind, imbuing agony in your subconscious without your knowing it.

Also, never make others tell a lie. When you detect a lie in the words of others, do not accept the lie.

It is best to walk along steering clear of lies, be they yours or others.

Verse 397, *Sutta Nipata*

When you tell a lie, incorrect information is overwritten on correct information in your mind, messing up the links among memories, which prompts noise to run wild in your thinking. This is what I wrote in my previous book, *Kangaenai Renshu* (Practice Not To Think). Here, let me touch on lies from a somewhat different angle.

So, when do you like to tell a lie? It is when you will benefit, when your image will be improved, or when you can cover up your disadvantages that you are tempted to tell a lie. But Buddha says that a person with a strong heart can suppress this temptation and refrain from telling a lie.

To begin with, why is lying bad? When you tell a lie, you harbor guilty feeling in your heart. You must try hard not to do something contradictory to what you have said. In other words, you must maintain consistency in order to prevent disclosure of your lie. Therefore, you are constantly reminded that you have told a lie. To be always conscious that you have done something wrong is a painful thing. That's why I don't like to tell a lie.

One day, an acquaintance of mine was invited to a certain event by one of his business partners. The day of the event coincided with the day he was planning a private trip. While all he had to do was to decline the invitation simply by citing his trip plan, he said, instead, "I have another engagement on that day," which was a lie that he was compelled to tell because the invitation came from an important business partner.

On the very day of the trip, however, being so excited about his plan, he forgot about the lie he had told and wrote on his Twitter, "I am leaving on a trip. I am so excited." After a while, he remembered that the person who had invited

him to the event was actually one of his Twitter followers. In order to cover up his previous, trivial lie, he had to tell another lie by hastily writing, "But I must finish a job before the trip" on his Twitter. My acquaintance had to laugh, saying that such was the natural consequence of his own foolish action.

It's tough if you can't forget even such a trivial lie. This means you can never give loose rein to your mind. You must be constantly on the alert in fear of losing consistency once you throw off all inhibitions.

And this is because you know that others will harbor a dislike for you when your lie is found out.

While many easily tell a lie themselves, they don't like it when someone lies to them. People tend to say, "Oh, this person can't be trusted because he tells a lie."

People don't like it when someone tells a lie to them because they perceive it as an indication that they are slighted. They may think, "It does not matter to him if he is found out to have told a lie." More melodramatically, they may perceive that the liar doesn't care if the relations with them are damaged because of the lie, leading to a dislike for the liar.

While it is unpleasant when someone lies to you, it is equally unpleasant to find out that someone is telling a lie to someone else. For instance, imagine yourself witnessing your colleague constantly telling a lie about why he does not show up in the office or why he cannot meet a certain person. When this goes on and on, you may start wondering if this person is telling you the truth and even suspect that he may be saying this to cover up something, judging from previous patterns, even though he has never told you a lie before.

When you continue to cover up a lie with another lie, you may eventually get accused of a lie that you did not tell.

Because a lie hurts the person who has lied, this harm one day comes back to you. That is why it is always easiest to tell the truth.

When You Find Yourself about to Tell a Lie, Confine Yourself to Observations of What's Going On.

What, then, should you do when someone asks you a question to which you must tell a lie? When someone asks where you were on a certain day, you can say, "Oh, here and there," or "Let's see where was I" if you do not wish to disclose the exact location. You are just evasive or you simply refuse to tell the

truth. This way, you don't have to tell a lie.

In these situations, if possible, you are advised to decline the offer without giving a reason rather than equivocating or giving a false reason. My advice is to say nothing rather than telling a lie.

It also happens that, when asked for your evaluation on something, you sometimes tell a white lie before you know it.

Perhaps you, too, have had an experience of praising what your companion evaluates highly, almost on reflex, even though you are not particularly impressed with it. Seeing as you do not think particularly highly of it, however, you cannot come up with your own original comment when it comes to more concrete evaluations. In these occasions, it is often revealed in one way or another that you are not actually so highly impressed with it. Thus, people may think of you as someone who goes along with others unthinkingly and speaks carelessly. Worse than that, you may be evaluated as someone not worthy of sincere dialogue.

If you wish to avoid this, you should not tell a lie. You don't have to go so far as saying, "I don't find it particularly good." When asked for your view, you may deflect the request by saying something like, "Oh, well . . . Hmmm, yeah . . . ," "Hmmm, what should I say," or "Perhaps I am not capable enough to say something solid about this work."

Occasionally, you may encounter a situation in which you find it diplomatically difficult to say something negative. Like so and so's baby is cute or so and so's child is adorable, etc. But it is also wearisome to praise a baby or a child when you don't find them particularly adorable.

On these occasions, you don't really have to bend over backwards to say the baby or child is cute. Instead, you can make a more concrete observation, such as "Look at these big eyes" and "This baby has a round nose." This way, you just make an observation of facts and adopt only what attracts you in your comment.

You may wish to say, "You can already recognize a cowlick on the baby's head," or "Look at those fluffy cheeks!" That is enough and you don't have to say flattery such as, "What a cute baby with fluffy cheeks!" Since others present may say, "What a cute baby," it would be enough to let the parents register that you are not uninterested.

It is all right to follow your true feeling and say a baby is cute or a dress looks good on someone if you really think so. When asked for your opinion on a dress

that you find unattractive on the wearer, however, you are advised to confine your comment to an observation of facts such as “It’s interesting that the polka dots are not all one size.”

You don’t have to say it’s a good idea if you don’t really think it is, when asked your view on a certain idea. It is better to respond by making some constructive comments, such as “It would be more interesting if this idea was linked to such-and-such.” This will demonstrate your interest in the idea.

To tell a lie, saying, for instance, “It’s a good idea” is actually an easy and crude way out. When you can actually make a more concrete comment, you tend to think that simple and casual praise would please the other party. In other words, we tell a lie very easily based on quite simplistic ideas.

I deliberately try hard not to tell a lie. Despite my efforts, however, I find myself accidentally telling a lie two or three times a year.

For instance, when you are faced with the choice of saying yes or no, even though no is closer to your heart, you might find it more beneficial to say yes. Because you are, so to speak, induced to say yes by your companion, the psychological burden of speaking against your mind will be slightly lighter. In these situations, you are bound to say, almost as a reflex, “Yes” or “I agree with you.” Rather than stirring up trouble by saying “No,” for which you might be disliked, you choose to say “Yes,” yielding to the temptation to improve your image. For crying out loud . . .

The worst outcome of a lie—no matter what kind, including a very white lie—is the heightened stress in your heart from saying something you don’t believe in.

Put in an utterly neutral situation, we are bound to speak our minds freely. When there is no gain or loss involved, you will simply say “It’s interesting” or “It’s not interesting,” following what your heart finds. You will say “It’s pretty” when you think it is, and you will say “It’s ugly” when you think it is ugly.

Nevertheless, you find yourself saying “It’s pretty” even though you don’t find it pretty, in consideration of what your companion might think of you. This is an act of distorting what comes out naturally from your heart, and it puts a burden on your heart.

That is why it wears you out to be in a situation where you may have to tell a lie against your heart. Let us practice not to tell a lie in order to avoid such agony.