

# The practice of Upekkhā

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Thank you all for your practice today. I'd like to share some thoughts on how quickly time seems to pass, particularly in moments of transition. We often find ourselves at the mercy of time's fast pace. One moment it's January, and before you know it, we're on the cusp of October. Life unfolds so quickly, sometimes without us even realizing it.

In these periods of transition, we become more conscious of how we shape our lives through our actions. For instance, I'm preparing to leave for a journey soon, a result of decisions and actions that I've taken. This is a powerful reminder that every thought and action has a consequence. The situations we find ourselves in today are the direct outcomes of our past actions of body, speech, and mind. This is where the Buddhist concept of **Kammasaka**, or the understanding that **all beings are owners of their actions**, comes into play.

The idea behind **Kammasaka** is that whatever is happening to us—whether good or bad—is a result of our past actions. This is not meant to be an uncaring observation but rather a gentle invitation to wisdom. Understanding that everything happens because of causes and conditions helps us let go of our attachment to controlling others' happiness or outcomes. We can wish for others to be happy, but we cannot dictate their happiness—it depends on their actions, not our desires.

This practice applies not only to others but also to ourselves. When we face judgmental or irritated thoughts, the simple reminder that "all beings are owners of their actions" can create space between our immediate reactions and the actions we choose to take. It helps us reflect: "What do I want to cultivate right now?" This mindfulness allows us to choose whether to engage with negative thoughts or to step back and not feed into them.

The Buddha was clear in his teachings that our happiness or suffering does not depend on external conditions but on how we relate to those conditions. This is the essence of equanimity, or **Upekkhā**. By cultivating balance in our minds, we create space to observe our reactions without being overwhelmed by them.

This practice is particularly useful in the world we live in today, where there is so much to react to, often in negative ways. Whether in our personal lives or when dealing with larger societal issues, **Kammasaka** reminds us that we have a choice. We can choose not to add more anger, hatred, or judgment to the world. Instead, we can choose to cultivate kindness, balance, and understanding.

In practicing **Upekkhā**, we learn to rest back rather than being fully enmeshed in others' lives or the external world. This is not about being indifferent; rather, it's about cultivating a wise distance that allows us to remain connected without being overwhelmed. It's like the love a grandparent feels for their grandchild—full of care but with less involvement in the day-to-day dramas.

**Kammasaka** is a powerful tool for reflection, whether we use the Pali term or find another phrase that resonates with us. The practice allows us to see how our actions affect our own and others' lives. It gives us the space to choose wisely in each moment, whether that's choosing not to react in a situation or to add more balance and kindness to our interactions. Over time, this understanding becomes more vivid as we see the direct results of our actions, both wholesome and unwholesome.

As we continue to cultivate this practice, may we find more balance in our lives and contribute to spreading that balance in the world. Let us pause and reflect on how we can manifest this understanding in our daily lives, whether dealing with loved ones, strangers, or even the cat that won't leave us alone when it's hungry. Every action matters, and every moment is an opportunity to choose wisely.