

The Threefold Discipline

The comprehension of suffering leads to faith or confidence in the triple gem

The Buddha explains very clearly that "I illustrate only two teachings, those are happiness and the way to happiness now and the past". In other words, we can understand The Buddha has explained suffering and getting rid of suffering. How does suffering arise? When we see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think something, it arises immediately when conditions are together and it ceases at the moment when conditions are vanished. Even though the experience arises and ceases at the moment, we think it is still happening since we have no real understanding. With this misunderstanding, as soon as we think about some experience that we had through our senses, we go to the real situation and we live in that situation as it is permanent and alive. Then we suffer or enjoy living in the past or the future without mindfulness and without intelligence. If we have real understanding, mindfulness and intelligence about impermanence of our experience, we are able to remember our past or future but we don't go to the past or future. It sounds we live in the present moment seeing the impermanence wisely without sorrow, lamentation, fear and craving. Then we are away from suffering. If somebody has this understanding, he tries to make it permanent for a lasting happiness. Then he finds about the path that leads to overcome suffering. That path is described shortly as three disciplines.

Virtue (*Seela*)
Concentration (*Samadhi*)
Wisdom (*Panna*)

This is the path that the supreme Buddha has pointed out for getting rid of all sufferings and achieving happiness. We can see the same order in the Buddha's all teachings. The Buddha said very clearly that we have to clear our vision at the very beginning on this path. Correct vision or right view means not to fall into any extremes as '**There is** or '**There isn't**'. We get all experiences through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. At one time only one sense acts and then others are not active. That experience arises and ceases at the moment according to conditions. When someone sees that the experience arises when conditions are together, he doesn't go to the extreme of nihilism (= annihilation belief / *Uccheda Ditthi*). Also, when he sees that the experience ceases when conditions separate, he doesn't go to the extreme of eternity view (*Sassatha Ditthi*). These two wrong views of annihilation and eternity should be overcome (abandoned) in one right vision. With this understanding the Buddhist follower realizes what happens to his life. The experience that we receive through six senses arises and ceases according to conditions at the moment. Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) would not come to (the future) occurrence. (අනුන්වං සම්භූතං ඉන්වා න භවිස්සති). Buddhism explains this teaching as the dependent origination. It means if we experience something now, it was not happened in the past in the same way like now. Also, the present experience doesn't go to the future in the same way. We should practice above threefold discipline with the understanding of the dependent origination.

The very first one is the discipline in speech and behavior. As long as we have this knowledge about impermanence, we are ready to control our speech and behavior. When a person has right understanding, he doesn't like to suffer further. He wants to live peacefully. That is why he spends a disciplined life. When he speaks something, he thinks it again and again whether it is correct. He abstains from false speech (*musavada*), tale-bearing (*pisunavaca*), harsh or abusive speech (*pharusavaca*) and idle chatter or gossip (*samphappalapa*). More and more when a person has right vision, where ever he goes he

practices it and gradually his speech is controlled. He is so comfortable with right speech. And he is uncomfortable to tell unwholesome words or wrong speech. Furthermore, he develops good behavior abstaining from misbehavior as taking life, stealing and sexual misconduct. He is interested in good action, correct behavior. When he leads a moral life, he is so happy because he has no mistakes in his life and he has nothing to be worry when he remembers his past. Here very especial thing is that he practices virtue with the success of his meditation. Therefore he never sees this virtuous life as a disturbance for his freedom. He is more comfortable if he has more discipline, however he practices it with right understanding not with blind faith.

The second one is concentration or tranquility what is the ability of controlling mind focusing on particular wholesome objects. With right understanding of the path of purification, when he has good discipline in his speech and action, he doesn't stop in virtue. He is not satisfied only with moral life. He goes towards meditation. Using some kinds of meditation techniques such as breathing meditation, loving kindness meditation, he develops his mind. He is interested in developing mental culture in the name of mental purification. In this level, Buddha's disciple hopes to clean his mind from hindrances such as desire, anger, jealousy etc. And he practices mindfulness. When he does something from morning till night, he does everything mindfully. When he practices mindfulness, he has a clear awareness about his mind and body. He considers mindfulness as his best friend, and he knows very well if he lost his mindfulness, he lost his peace of mind like losing the best friend. Therefore every moment he tries to live with mindfulness that is the best friend. Our real success depends on how much we have practiced mindfulness about mind and body.

The third one is wisdom which is the intelligence of seeing about arising and ceasing. As the result of practicing mindfulness and purifying the mind from hindrances, mind is very pure, calm and quiet. With this pure mind, we are ready to reflect on impermanence. The experience that we receive through our six senses which are form, sounds etc. arises and ceases immediately. It occurs always instantly. We reflect on it again and again, we practice it as much as we can without losing valuable time. As the result of practicing wisdom, gradually we can reduce defilements that are in our mind such as anger, desire, and delusion. We use all our strength in the name of these three disciplines for real happiness which is the visible result in this life itself.

On this path of getting rid of suffering, mindfulness in mind and body and wisdom in seeing the impermanence are the most important parts. With our knowledge and reflection we consider mindfulness and wisdom as our two eyes which help us to see the world. If we can really practice mindfulness and wisdom, defilements decrease gradually. It means we are going towards the purification of mind. When we see the results, we are happy and satisfied. Also we hurry to receive all results in this life itself because the Dhamma is with visible results and immediately effective. If we live with the Dhamma, we have no suffering. If we go away from the Dhamma, suffering disturbs us. With this understanding, we remember not to go away from the Dhamma since we like happiness. If someone likes real happiness, he likes to practice the Dhamma. More and more when we go forward with mindfulness and wisdom, our faith in the triple gem which the Buddha (The Buddha's enlightenment), the Dhamma (His sublime truth) and the Sangha (His noble disciples) gradually increases. That is one of the signs that we are going on this real path towards the purification.

When someone practices these three disciplines with correct view about the dependent origination, he goes forward step by step overcoming suffering until final destination which is final bliss of liberation, Nibbana. Virtue helps concentration. Concentrated mind helps wisdom. When mind is concentrated, he realizes the world reality as it is. So, three disciplines are interrelated.

Virtue is the foundation of the path of purification. Concentration is in the middle. Concentration is not enough to eradicate defilements completely. That is why Buddhism says us to develop another step that is insight meditation by practicing wisdom for permanent happiness. Wisdom focuses on liberation from all suffering in this life itself. Here, with the concentrated mind, we reflect on all kinds of things that mental and physical on three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ).

They are;

- i. Impermanence (Anicca - අනිත්‍ය)
- ii. Unsatisfactoriness (Dukkha-දුක්ඛ)
- iii. Selflessness (Anatta-අනාත්ම)

We do reflection again and again on these three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). As a result of practicing this world reality, we develop wisdom with the knowledge of impermanence. Simultaneously, we develop five qualities which are confidence (සද්ධා), effort (විරිය), mindfulness (සනි), concentration (සමාධි) and wisdom (පඤ්ඤා). As the result of practicing The Noble Eightfold Path with mindfulness and wisdom, we gradually reach the real happiness increasing defilements especially desire, anger and delusion. The real success or happiness of our life depends on how far we have eradicated craving or desire, anger or ill will and delusion or ignorance. Final experience of practicing mindfulness and wisdom is living in the present moment with full awareness seeing arising and ceasing without any desirable attachment or destruction. It means we have overcome all tangles, unsatisfactoriness and suffering. As soon as we get any experience in our senses, we are able to see them as impermanent. When we understand that it was not in anywhere before experience, and also after we experience something, it doesn't remain. Every moment of our experience those are five aggregates (Panchupadanakkhandha) or mind (Nama) and matter (Rupa) arises when conditions are together, and also the experience ceases when conditions separate. This is the ultimate truth that we have to realize for the ultimate goal that is the final bliss of liberation, Nibbana.

May The Triple Gem Bless You!

May all Being be Well, Happy, Wealthy and Peaceful!

(Tuesday Dhamma Discussion at LA Buddhist Vihara in Pasadena)