

## The Three Disciplines in Buddhism

The main purpose of everyone is happiness. People do everything wishing happiness. Unfortunately, people's activities whatever they mostly do for happiness, bring them suffering. Sometimes we are happy about what we do, but that happiness is impermanent. Anytime it can change, and that happiness itself may bring suffering. In this situation, understanding what the Buddhist taught is very important to know the real path which brings us real happiness. That is why we should pay good attention to what the Buddha said. By listening to the Buddha's message, we have to be knowledgeable about the path of liberation.

Our liberation depends on how far we have achieved wisdom. Wisdom means right vision about what happens to our life. According to Buddhism, four factors help us to develop wisdom. Presenting these four qualities, Buddhism encourages us to practice the path of purification as much as we can. Those four factors are;

1. Association with a good friend who explains the Buddha's real message  
(Sappurisa sansevo - සප්පුරිස සංසේවෝ)
2. Listening to the Buddha's Message (Saddhamma savanam- සද්ධම්ම සවණං)
3. Wise Reflection (Yoniso manasikàro- යෝනිසෝ මනසිකාරෝ)
4. Practicing the message (Dhammànudhamma patipatti-ධම්මානුධම්මපටිපත්ති)

When we associate a noble friend, we can listen to the sublime truth that a Buddha emphasized. Listening to this noble message, we go forward practicing the message with wise reflection. Here, wise reflection plays a main role in the path of enlightenment. Also we have to practice three disciplines; virtue, tranquility and wisdom.

Through listening to the Buddha's sublime truth we are knowledgeable about the karmic law and the dependent origination. Karmic law means the results about whatever we do with consciousness. If we do something with wicked mind, we will have the sorrowful results because of polluted mind. Also if we do something with pure mind, we will have fruitful results because of pure mind. Understanding of the karmic law is the first step of getting rid of suffering. As much as we know about the karmic law, we try to avoid evil and put more effort to do good deed. Doing evil means earning suffering, and also doing good means earning happiness.

The second step of liberation is the understanding of the dependent origination. Here we are knowledgeable about impermanence. We usually experience through our senses such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. When objects such as forms, sounds, smell, taste reach senses, we experience about the world. The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and instantly ceases at once. Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) would not come to (the future) occurrence. (අහුන්වා සම්භූතං හුන්වා න භවිස්සති). This is the impermanence in Buddhism. It means if we experience something now, it was not happened in the past in the same way like now. Also present experience doesn't go to the future in the same way. If somebody can understand this reality, he is ready to give up extremes

about the past and the future. Also he tries to live in the present moment seeing arising and ceasing wisely with fully awareness.

To be permanent this experience, we have to follow a path that is the noble eightfold path. It is,

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|----|---------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Right Understanding | (Sammà Ditthi)    | සම්මා දිට්ඨි  |
| 2. | Right Thoughts      | (Sammà samkappa)  | සම්මා සංකප්ප  |
| 3. | Right Speech        | (Sammà Vācà)      | සම්මා වාචා    |
| 4. | Right Action        | (Sammà kammantha) | සම්මා කම්මන්ත |
| 5. | Right Livelihood    | (Sammà àjiva)     | සම්මා ආජීව    |
| 6. | Right Effort        | (Sammà Vàyàma)    | සම්මා වායාම   |
| 7. | Right Mindfulness   | (Sammà sati)      | සම්මා සති     |
| 8. | Right Concentration | (Sammà samàdhi)   | සම්මා සමාධි   |

As much as we have right understanding about the path listening to the Buddha's message, we are gradually ready to practice other steps. Day by day we go forward wisely in this path seeing the reality which is impermanence. We do everything in our life living on these steps. We never go away from this path as much as we have right understanding. We consider this path as our real refuge to get rid of suffering in this life and here after as well. These eight steps consist of three disciplines those are;

1. Virtue
2. Tranquility (or concentration)
3. Wisdom

With the understanding of The Noble Eightfold Path, we form self-discipline in our speech and behavior. Before we do or speak something, we reflect on it again and again whether it is good or bad, right or wrong. As much as we have this discipline in our behavior, we have no mistakes. We can remember our life with pleasant mind because of our good behavior. This discipline in our behavior and speech helps us to go forward in the path of purification practicing meditation purifying mind. Virtue or moral conduct is the foundation of the spiritual path. Therefore the Buddha has mostly pointed out the importance of practicing virtue. Discipline in senses is also very important and useful for a successful moral life.

In purification of the mind, we mainly use two meditation techniques that are tranquility (or concentration) and insight. In the tranquility meditation, we keep our mind with a particular good thought. As a result of concentrated mind, we can live for a long time without suffering and stress, but it is not permanent and it can be changed. Here we practice and develop our awareness especially in mind and body. We practice to do all kinds of activities mindfully. Mindfulness is one of the most important qualities that we have to develop for purification of our mind. Also mindfulness helps us to keep our mind in the present moment. The nature of our mind is going to the past and future without awareness. By practicing tranquility meditation, we train our mind to

live in the present moment with mindfulness. And when mind goes to the past or future we are aware of mind. There are forty techniques in Buddhism to develop mindfulness. When we practice those techniques with right understanding, we don't stop in concentration. We go forward seeing world reality as impermanence.

Concentration is not enough to eradicate defilements completely. That is why Buddhism says us to develop another step that is insight meditation for permanent happiness. Here, with the concentrated mind, we reflect on all kinds of things that mental and physical on three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). They are;

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|------|--------------------|---------|
| i.   | Impermanence,      | අනිත්‍ය |
| ii.  | Unsatisfactoriness | දුක්ඛ   |
| iii. | Selflessness       | 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 (සති), concentration (සමාධි) and wisdom (පඤ්ඤා). As the result of practicing The Noble Eightfold Path with mindfulness and wisdom, we gradually reach to the real happiness increasing defilements. Final experience of this is living in the present moment with full awareness seeing arising and ceasing without any desirable attachment or destruction. It means we have overcome 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 arises when conditions are together, and the experience ceases when conditions separate. This is the ultimate truth that we have to realize for the ultimate goal that is the liberation, Nibbana.

May the Triple Gem Bless you!

තෙරුවන් සරණයි!

May all beings be well happy and peaceful!

(සියලු සත්ත්වයෝ සුවපත් වෙත්වා!)

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