

The Five Spiritual Faculties

('Panca Indriyadhamma' පඤ්චඉන්ද්‍රියධම්ම - in Pali)

The main purpose of all Buddhist doctrines is to show the path of getting rid of suffering (or unsatisfactoriness). For that purpose Buddhism always encourages us to develop our knowledge, reflection and practice according to the world reality as it is. When we listen to what the Buddha taught through noble association, gradually we are able to increase our Dhamma knowledge. Here we should be clever to understand the real meaning what the Buddha taught. When we go forward with the knowledge of Buddhist doctrines, our knowledge and comprehension spread in two areas which are the Karmic law and the dependent origination.

The Karmic (volitional action) law means whatever we do with intention we will have the same results according to our intention. Not just actions come to results. According to Buddhism only volitional actions come to consequences. Here Volition (*cetanā*), under which that we do something, is very important. If someone does something with an impure mind bodily, verbally, or mentally, he will have the evil results because of his polluted mind. On the other hand, if someone acts with a pure mind, he will have the fruitful results because of his pure mind. Furthermore, we have to understand the situation in which we are now is the result of our actions that we did in our previous lives or in this life itself. With the understanding of the Karmic law, we always try to overcome unwholesome thoughts and try to develop positive thoughts as much as we can.

The comprehension of the dependent origination is the most important understanding in Buddhism. The dependent origination is the heart of Buddhism. Understanding of main Buddhist teachings completely depend on understanding of the dependent origination. Also, this understanding helps us to identify the Buddha. That is why Buddhism says,

He who sees the Dependent Origination sees the Dhamma.
(*Yo paticcasamuppādam passati so dhamma passati*)

He who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha.
(*Yo dhamma passati so mam passati*)

Hence this is the real way to see the Dhamma and the Buddha as well.

The dependent origination specially points out what happens to our life, what is the real nature of the world and how suffering arises. Further, the dependent origination explains how ignorance arises and how to overcome ignorance which is the main cause for suffering arising. We usually experience through our senses such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. When objects such as forms, sounds, smell, taste, touch and mental objects reach senses, we experience the world. The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and instantly ceases at once. The

thought which arises in the present moment ceases promptly, affecting (influencing) the next thought. The thought that arises in every moment is a fresh one. **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence.** (අනුත්වා සම්භූතං භුත්වා න භවිස්සති). It means if we experience something now, it did not happen 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. In addition, he tries to live in the present moment seeing arising and ceasing wisely with full awareness.

Whatever we experience through our senses in our entire life is the arising of five aggregates. Our knowledge of five aggregates spreads within the understanding of the dependent origination.

The five aggregates are;

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| i. | Matter | (<i>Rupa</i> - රූප) |
| ii. | Feelings | (<i>Vedanā</i> - වේදනා) |
| iii. | Perception | (<i>Sannā</i> - සංකල්පය) |
| iv. | Mental formations | (<i>Samkhāra</i> - සංඛාර) |
| v. | Consciousness | (<i>Vinnāna</i> - විඤ්ඤාණ) |

When we experience through our senses about the world, these five aggregates arise together. They can't be separated. As the result of arising of these five things, we have an experience. These five aggregates suddenly arise and also cease instantly. When we experience something, they have not only arisen but ceased also at once. When we experience something through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue or body, these five senses can't get pleasure or pain. Those experiences ceased instantly, we get pleasure or pain in the sense of mind as a past experience. However, we think that we experience in the present because of ignorance. That is why we suffer. If we can understand that these five aggregates arise and cease at the moment with the condition, we are able to understand its impermanence. Then we know that we have nothing to desire or hate. It means we have overcome suffering. As much as we have this understanding we are liberated from unsatisfactoriness. It means we are ready to understand the four noble truths. They are:

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| 1. | The suffering (or unsatisfactoriness) | (<i>Dukkha Sacca</i> - දුක්ඛ සච්ච) |
| 2. | The cause (origin) of unsatisfactoriness | (<i>Samudaya Sacca</i> - සමුදය සච්ච) |
| 3. | The cessation of unsatisfactoriness | (<i>Nirodha Sacca</i> - නිරෝධ සච්ච) |
| 4. | The path that leads to get rid of unsatisfactoriness | (<i>Magga Sacca</i> - මග්ග සච්ච) |

When we don't have a clear understanding of suffering, the five aggregates arise. The five aggregates arise because of ignorance. Thus Buddhism says: the arising of five aggregates is the

arising of suffering (*Samkhaittena pancupadanakkhanda Dukkha*). This is the first truth within the four noble truths. When the five aggregates arise with ignorance, desire (greed, lustful desire or craving), which is the origin of suffering also, arises. Desire is the nearest reason for suffering. Ignorance is the initial reason. Getting rid of desire which relates to ignorance is the cessation of suffering. That is the third truth. The noble eightfold path is the path that leads to getting rid of suffering. They are:

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| 1. Right Understanding | (<i>Sammā ditthi</i>) | සම්මා දිට්ඨි |
| 2. Right Thoughts/ Intension | (<i>Sammā samkappa</i>) | සම්මා සංකප්ප |
| 3. Right Speech | (<i>Sammā vācā</i>) | සම්මා වාචා |
| 4. Right Action | (<i>Sammā kammantha</i>) | සම්මා කම්මන්ත |
| 5. Right Livelihood | (<i>Sammā ājiva</i>) | සම්මා ආජීව |
| 6. Right Effort | (<i>Sammā vāyāma</i>) | සම්මා වායාම |
| 7. Right Mindfulness | (<i>Sammā sati</i>) | සම්මා සති |
| 8. Right Concentration | (<i>Sammā samādhi</i>) | සම්මා සමාධි |

As much as we have right understanding about the path by listening to the Buddha's message, we are ready to practice other steps gradually. With the knowledge of the Karmic law and the dependent origination, day by day we go forward in this path wisely seeing the reality which is impermanence wisely. These eight steps consist of three disciplines which are virtue, tranquility (or concentration) and wisdom. With the understanding of The Noble Eightfold Path, we form self-discipline in our speech and behavior. Discipline helps us to go forward in the path of purification practicing meditation. In purification of the mind, we mainly use two meditation techniques that are concentration or tranquility 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.

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

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

We reflect on these three characteristics of existence (*ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ*) again and again. As a result of practicing this world reality, we develop wisdom with the knowledge of impermanence. Simultaneously, we develop these five qualities which are confidence (*සද්ධා*), effort (*වීරිය*),

mindfulness (සනි), 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, overcoming defilements. Final experience of this is the ability of living in the present moment with full awareness seeing arising and ceasing without any desirable attachment or destruction. It means we have overcome unsatisfactoriness.

Wisdom means understanding of world reality and mind & body as it is. As much as we have this understanding, we can be free from all defilements. Then we have a clear knowledge of how much freedom from suffering we have. This is a visible result that a person can gain in this life itself as the result of practicing Buddha's teachings. On this path, honesty, loving kindness, knowledge, wise reflection and meditation are very important and useful qualities that we have to develop gradually from beginning to the highest level. Especially, we have to cultivate mindfulness and intelligence (the knowledge about the dependent origination -*Paticcasamuppāda*) to the maximum level. If someone can go on this path correctly, he or she can reach real happiness overcoming all pain, sorrow, suffering and unsatisfactoriness. Buddhism always points out the path for this liberation. Our real success depends on how much we have overcome suffering, not earning money or any other material things.

As the result of practicing this path, the Five Spiritual Faculties ('Panca Indriya Dhamma' in Pali) increase in our mind. They are;

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| 1. | Faith | (<i>Saddhā</i>) | - සද්ධා |
| 2. | Energy | (<i>Viriya</i>) | - විරිය |
| 3. | Mindfulness | (<i>Sathi</i>) | - සනි |
| 4. | Concentration | (<i>Samādhi</i>) | - සමාධි |
| 5. | Wisdom | (<i>Pannā</i>) | - පඤ්ඤා |

'Saddhā' means the faith or confidence that a person has about the supreme Buddha, his teachings and his noble disciples. Actually, this is not a blind faith, it is the confidence that he gains by understanding the qualities of the Buddha, his teachings and his noble disciples. As much as an intelligent person consciously listens to the Buddha's message consisting of the dependent origination, his confidence about the triple gem increases gradually.

'Viriya' means the energy to decrease evil or unwholesomeness and to develop goodness or wholesomeness. As a result of the knowledge of the world reality that is the karmic force and the dependent origination, the intelligent person is ready to practice the path that leads to real happiness. Then he doesn't like to suffer further. As his faith in the triple gem increases, he develops his courage to avoid unwholesome deeds and develop wholesome deeds.

'Sathi' means mindfulness or awareness. With faith and energy, the intelligent person tries to live every moment mindfully. Mindfulness is also divided into four categories as 1.the contemplation of body, 2.the contemplation of feelings, 3.the contemplation of mind, 4.the contemplation of mental conditions. According to '**Mahā Satipattāna Sutta**', all our activities, thoughts, feelings and mental conditions can be included in mindfulness. If we are in right mindfulness, it means we are on the path of purification and we are on the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

'Samādhī' means tranquility or concentration of mind. As a result of practicing our mind on a particular technique such as, loving kindness meditation, we can purify our mind from defilements like greed and hatred. Then our mind is like a pure, steady, calm water-well. That pure mind can gain happiness and it causes to discover and see world reality with wisdom. The wisdom depends on concentration. Wisdom and concentration are interrelated and help each other.

'Pannā' means wisdom. The wisdom that comes in Buddhism is focused on understanding of the dependent origination (or the cause and effect). It means the experience that we have through our senses arising and ceasing at the same moment. Nothing comes to the present from the past and nothing goes to the future from the present. This is the only way to get rid of all suffering. That means we are on the way to happiness. If we can practice these five spiritual faculties always, then every moment we are reaching for liberation from suffering every moment. This is the way to attain a life with fresh perspectives.

When a Supreme Buddha meets a person, the Buddha becomes aware of that person's spiritual power that he practiced in his previous lives. Then the Buddha decides how to explain the world reality to him. So, the Buddha searches through that person's mind with the Buddha's own mind. According to what he learns from this search, the Buddha understands the person's state of development and explains the Buddha's teachings to him. These five things are the real properties which brings happiness in our Samsaric Journey.

May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well, happy and peaceful!

(සියලු සත්ත්වයෝ සුවපත් වෙත්වා!)

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