

The Seven Enlightenment Factors (*Satta Bojjhamga* -සත්ත බොජ්ඣංග)

With the great compassion and great wisdom, the Buddha always emphasized the path how to get rid of ignorance and the way that leads to achieve wisdom. Our happiness depends on how far we have reduced defilements like greed, anger and delusion which disturb our inner peace. Also, reducing defilements depends on how far we are knowledgeable about the process of the arising suffering and the cessation of suffering. Here association of noble friends and listening to the Buddha's teachings play a main role.

As the result of having a spiritual friend, we can listen to what the Buddha taught. Whenever we are unhappy, sad or worried, we are ignorant. It means we have no mindfulness and wisdom. We experience through our senses like eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. When we experience something, it arises at the moment as conditions are together. That experience doesn't come to the present from the past. Also, that experience doesn't go the future from the present. It arises and ceases at the moment according to conditions. However, because of our ignorance about this process, we think before experience that was and after experience it remains. This is the main characteristic of ignorance. If we are intelligent to overcome this misunderstanding, we are able to get rid of suffering and achieve real happiness. With this understanding as the result of listening to the Buddha's teaching, we encounter a path to achieve this goal. That is the noble eightfold path, in short three disciplines: virtue (Seela), concentration (Samadi), wisdom (Panna). Especially, here we should spend our entire life in the fourfold mindfulness. We are always aware of body and mind. Everything should be done with mindfulness. When someone is on this path, the seven factors of enlightenment gradually increase in every moment. They are:

1. Mindfulness (*Sati*)
2. Investigation (*Dhammavicaya*)
3. Energy (*Viriya*)
4. Happiness (*Pīti*)
5. Tranquility (*Passaddhi*)
6. Concentration (*Samādhi*)
7. Equanimity (*Upekkhā*)

These seven factors of enlightenment that lead to enlightenment describe the steps which someone passes on the path of liberation. In many places in the Buddhist canon these seven factors can be seen. The factors are supposed to be mainly useful as antidotes to the Five Hindrances - sensual desire, ill will, sloth, restlessness, and uncertainty. And, they are very useful to achieve wisdom.

1. Mindfulness (*Sati*)

The Buddha has point out to practice the right mindfulness as the only path to overcome all unsatisfactorinesses, lamentations and sorrow. Also, mindfulness is the only way to enlightenment. Mindfulness should be practiced in four ways as the contemplation of body, the contemplation of feelings, the contemplation of consciousness and the contemplation of mental formations. In short, mindfulness can be described as a whole-body-and-mind awareness of the present moment. Mindfulness is an essential practice in Buddhist doctrines. By practicing mindfulness, we should not only practice mindfulness, but reflect on arising and ceasing of body, feelings, consciousness and mental objects.

2. Keen investigation (*Dhammavicaya*)

Keen investigation is the second factor which is the wise comprehension about the Dhamma. Dhamma means the nature of the world or the truth. The Buddha declares that the whole world in the being which consists of body and mind. Also, the world is the arising of the five aggregates which are form, feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness. The bottom line of our all experiences is the five aggregates. Without these five there is nothing. If anything that has to arise or cease is the five aggregates.

When the disciple who listened to what the Buddha taught always is mindful, he reflects on the world reality again and again with concentrated mind. Then he sees and investigates the three characteristics: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and egolessness. This is the ultimate truth in anything. He reflects on everything as above three. Also, through his understanding, he realizes everything by his intelligence not by a blind faith. Here the Buddha's disciple practices keen investigation as an enlightenment factor.

3. Energy (*Viriya*)

Thus, when the disciple gradually goes forward by practicing above qualities, he is happy seeing the results, since the Dhamma is visible results and immediately effective. Then his courage or determination increases to go forward on the deliverance path. That effort is said as viriya, energy or enthusiastic effort in the seven factors of enlightenment.

When the disciple further goes forward on the path of enlightenment, he always tries to go away from evil or unwholesome deeds and practice good which is wholesome as much as he can. This effort can be divided into four.

1. The energy to avoid the unwholesome that isn't done yet.
2. The energy to not to do unwholesome that is already done.
3. The energy to start the good or wholesome that isn't done yet.
4. The energy to improve the good or wholesome that is already done.

4. Happiness (*Pīti*)

When someone goes forward on the path of liberation by practicing enlightenment factors from mindfulness, his inner peace, happiness increases day by day. Happiness that comes here isn't just sensual fun. It is the spiritual pleasure which arises from wholesome mental conditions. Here, happiness grows in the field of right mindfulness.

5. Tranquility (*Passaddhi*)

Calmness or tranquility of body and consciousness is the fifth enlightenment factor. As the result of practicing the enlightenment path the Buddhist disciple feels his spiritual pleasure even in his physical body. He is very comfortable physically as well as mentally. We can't generate this tranquility by force. It arises naturally as correctly practicing other factors too.

6. Concentration (*Samādhi*)

Right Concentration also is one of the factors of enlightenment as the result of practicing right mindfulness and reducing hindrances. Here the disciple is clever to keep his mind in a wholesome object for a long time. His mind is unshaken with unwholesome thoughts. Mind is like still pure water. Mind is very pure, calm, quite, pleasant as well. This concentration isn't just like deep sleep, waking or dreaming. It is an awoken, intelligent, mental condition.

7. Equanimity (*Upekkhā*)

Equanimity is the last enlightenment factor. In the Buddhist point of view equanimity is a balance between the extremes of aversion and desire. In other words, it is not being pulled this way and that way by what you like and dislike. Bhikkhu Bodhi says: This equanimity is "evenness of mind, unshakeable freedom of mind, a state of inner equipoise that cannot be upset by gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, pleasure and pain. Upekkha is freedom from all points of self-reference; it is indifference only to the demands of the ego-self with its craving for pleasure and position, not to the well-being of one's fellow human beings."

May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well happy and peaceful!

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