

The Buddhist Path to Stress Management

The main purpose of everyone's life is happiness. People do everything like studying, getting married, earning money and raising children wishing happiness which is the main purpose of life. Unfortunately, we go away from happiness instead of towards the real happiness day by day. Hence understanding how Buddhism illustrates happiness and its path is very important to achieve the real happiness.

If we have any kind of negative feeling such as stress in our mind, its cause is impure mind. When the mind is with desire (or greed, craving), anger or delusion, the mind is unclean. Impure mind always brings suffering, discomfort, tears, unsatisfactoriness and restlessness. Also, impure mind with defilements such as lust, anger and delusion always disturb peace of mind. The main path how to overcome suffering is the understanding of mental condition what happens to one's mind in the present moment. Here knowledge and mindfulness play a main role.

If someone has a clear understanding, he can see that whenever the mind has suffering or stress, mind is with desire or anger. Also, both desire and anger depend on the capacity of delusion. Whenever someone is suffering, he is in a past experience. When we think our past, our mind usually runs to the past and lives in that situation as that incidence is still happening. If we are clever to keep our attention at the moment with wise reflection, we are able to remember past without anger and lust.

People are mostly stressed because of desire or anger. If someone has a big attachment after having a lustful experience, he thinks about it again and again to gain it or keep it continuously. Then he is unsatisfied and worried when it changes or is out of control. Similarly after having an unwilling or unpleasant experience if someone thinks that it is still happening, his mind conflicts against the experience. Then he suffers or worries. Both attachment and conflict arise whenever there is delusion or ignorance. Delusion means unknowing of arising and ceasing of our experience that we receive through our senses.

To reduce desire, anger and delusion, people should use short time as well as long time techniques. As a short time technique to reduce desire, anger and delusion, we should be knowledgeable about the Karmic law. The Karmic law points out the cause and effect of the mind and its results. If someone does something with a wicked mind, he will receive bad results because of polluted mind. Simultaneously, if someone does something with pure mind, he will have the fruitful results because of pure mind. With this understanding nobody likes to receive evil results. Therefore they go away from evil as much as possible. He always tries to keep mind away from lust and anger. Not doing evil results not having contrition and suffering. On the other hand, he tries to practice good deeds because he knows doing merits brings happiness. Practicing good deeds is receiving happiness. Practicing good is a synonym of happiness. With this understanding he tries to fulfil good deeds as much as he can. Here he practices generosity,

morality and meditation to generate his spiritual energy. After doing these meritorious deeds, he is happy thinking of those deeds. He has less or no reasons to regret. Also he has a lot of reasons to be happy. Further he sees the visible results of his activities in this life itself. He is encouraged by doing good deeds and discouraged by doing evil.

Even though we have a lot of facilities and have achieved mundane goals, we are mostly unsatisfied in those things. We find new things again and again until we die because of unsatisfactoriness. When we have enjoyments, and when we are with nears and dears, and when we are healthy, wealthy and well, we are happy, we enjoy with them. But when those things change into bad way, when those things aren't in our control, we suffer, fear, cry, we lament, we are upset and we blame others. Finally, in the end of our life, we mostly live with sorrow and tear. Although we are happy sometimes, that happiness is exiguous, and sorrow is plentiful.

Especially Buddhism illustrates the three reasons that we have to find a spiritual teacher and his teaching. They are;

1. Old age
2. Death
3. Rebirth

A person enjoys himself when he is in his young age, but he suffers in his old age even though he has a lot of education, money and relatives because most of his near and dear went away, and most of his things are out of his control. The reason is we fully trust in our physical body, complexion, close relatives and friends. When they change and go away, we suffer. This is the first reason that we have to find a spiritual leader, his sublime teaching and practice it in this short life. And we can't live forever. We are subject to die. We have to say good bye to others, leaving all kinds of near and dear that we earned hard and go alone without any material things whether we like or not, and whether we know or not. Then we lament when we lose them. This is the second reason that we have to find a spiritual teacher. If we can finish Sansaric journey after death, it is ok. We can live according to any kind of lifestyle if we have no rebirth after death. But the problem is we have to be reborn after death according to the way lived and how our mental condition was. According to Buddhism, this is the main cause that we have to find a spiritual teacher and practice his doctrines promptly.

The second step of reducing stress with a long time technique is the understanding of cause and effect, the Dependent Origination (*Paticca-samuppada*). To reduce stress more, a wise person has to go forward on the path of what the Buddha taught. Here understanding of impermanence is one of the essential needs. This is the main theme or the unique taught in Buddhism. We get experience through our senses such as eyes, ears, nose When we see, hear or smell something, it means five aggregates (Forms, feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness) arise together and cease at the moment. At the moment when conditions are together experience arises, also the experience ceases when conditions separate nothing

remaining. This truth represents the impermanence. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is the impermanence, *Anicca*. Whatever experience that we have right now arises at the moment, and immediately, that experience ceases when conditions separate. However, our ignorance doesn't accept this reality. Our ignorance accepts as present experience comes to present from the past and that experience goes to the future from the present. This misconception which is ignorance is the main reason of suffering. If someone can overcome this misunderstanding gradually according to the Buddhist point of view, he or she is able to overcome suffering.

This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illuminates. The impermanence is described in Buddhism according to the dependent origination (*Paticca Samuppada*) This is the world reality according to the ultimate truth whether we like or not, and whether we know or not. Unknowing or ignorance of cause and effect is the main cause of suffering as well as stress. If someone has this knowledge, he tries to overcome suffering practicing the Buddha's message. He always tries to live in the present moment seeing impermanence. Then he has no regrets or wishes. He lives fully mindful. He sees the beauty of life living in the present moment. Whatever he thinks about past or future, he knows that he only reads his mind and not the real situation. He sees past or future without greed and anger. With this knowledge he may find the path to achieve this goal. The path of purification is the three disciplines. They are

1. Virtue
2. Tranquility
3. Wisdom

These three disciplines again can be described as eight steps. It is called as the Noble Eightfold Path. They are

The Noble Eight Fold Path –

1. Right Understanding (*Sammā Ditthi*)
2. Right Thoughts/Intention (*Sammā samkappa*)
3. Right Speech (*Sammā Vācā*)
4. Right Action (*Sammā kammantha*)
5. Right Livelihood (*Sammā ājiva*)
6. Right Effort (*Sammā Vāyāma*)
7. Right Mindfulness (*Sammā sathi*)
8. Right Concentration (*Sammā samādhi*)

By practicing this path, finally we should have only two abilities which are concentration and wisdom. If we are clever to keep our attention with concentration at the moment and reflect on impermanence, we are able to overcome all suffering, stress and unsatisfactoriness. That is why the Buddha explained as intelligent persons we have to practice only two those are

concentration and wisdom. Our success completely depends on how far we can reflect on impermanence with concentrated mind. Here we have a clear understanding everything those are our internal senses, external objects and five aggregates arises and ceases at the moment. Any of them is not permanent. If we have higher contemplation about this impermanence about everything, we are able to overcome suffering. Then we are free from desire, anger and delusion completely. Simultaneously, we can be free from stress entirely.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well happy and peaceful!

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